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DISCOURSES

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE

EVIDENCE, INFLUENCE, AND DOCTRINES

OF

CHRISTIANITY.

By the Rev. ROBERT GRAY, M. A.

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M DCC XCIII.

TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND

WILLIAM,

LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER.

MY LORD,

ENCOURAGED by your Lordſhip's very flattering Recommendation of a former Work, to the Clergy of your Dioceſe, I preſume to ſolicit your Attention to the preſent Publication. Proud of that, and of other Teſtimonies of your Notice, I cannot but feel impreſſed with Sentiments of perſonal Obligation to your Lordſhip, and chearfully avail myſelf of this Occaſion to profeſs them.

The Authority of your Lordſhip's Judgment, could it be pleaded as affording any Sanction to the Appearance of the following Diſcourſes, would ſecure their Author from all Apprehenſion as to the Reception which they might experience from the Public. As he cannot boaſt of that Sanction, he inſcribes them to you, not to ſhelter them under the Protection of your Name, but to gratify himſelf in the Expreſſion of that grateful Reſpect which he entertains for your Lordſhip. Although the preſent Production does not diſplay that Solidity of Remark, and Accuracy of Diſcrimination, which characteriſe your Reſearches on Subjects of Theology and ancient Erudition, yet it will, I truſt, be accepted not unfavourably, ſince it was deſigned at leaſt to aſſiſt and promote the Influence of that Religion, of which you are ſo eminently an Ornament, and of which your Exertions and Writings ſo ſucceſsfully contribute to ſupport the Authority and Doctrines.

That

That you, my Lord, amidſt the elevated Stations which you ſo honourably fill in the Church, and in the Univerſity, ſtill find Time for very general and extenſive Enquiry, is well known; and I hope it will not be conſidered as too preſumptuous to expect that a few of your leiſure Moments may be allotted to the peruſal of the following Pages. The unexpected Inſtance of your Lordſhip's Favour in the Author's Behalf, already manifeſted in the Courſe of your zealous Attention to the Cauſe of ſacred Literature, renders him ſolicitous to obtain your Approbation of the preſent Work.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

With great Reſpect,

Your obliged and obedient Servant,

ROBERT GRAY.

Twickenham,
April 20, 1793.

PREFACE.

THE following Diſcourſes are offered to the public, upon a preſumption that the importance of their ſubjects may recommend them to its attention, though they ſhould be thought to promiſe but little novelty of enquiry. Every point connected with the evidence and doctrines of chriſtianity has been frequently diſcuſſed; yet each, perhaps, is capable of farther illuſtration. The attention of mankind ſhould be often drawn to themes of religious conſideration, diſcuſſed in a ſtyle and manner adapted to the diſpoſition of the age. It is neceſſary, frequently, to viſit the ground on which chriſtianity was firſt eſtabliſhed, to aſcertain the limits and

extent of the primitive faith, and to recover the parts taken by unjuſt violence, or loſt by injudicious conceſſion. It is uſeful to preſent, in a familiar and popular form, the beſt ſupported opinions, upon important topics and principles of our religion; to vindicate its relations and doctrines, by argument and authority, from thoſe miſrepreſentations which they may have ſuffered; to ſeparate them from ſpurious additions, and to refute the objections raiſed up, or revived againſt them.

There is, perhaps, no more uſeful and compendious mode of communicating religious inſtruction than that of Sermons; which intereſt very general attention, and convey, with occaſional effect, impreſſive and permanent information.

Some of the ſubjects here ſelected by the Author, are among thoſe which appear to him to have been leſs frequently conſidered, under this form, than their importance merits. Diſcourſes, upon religious ſubjects, being uſually written for oral communication,

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are conſtructed in ſuch form as is deemed beſt calculated for popular inſtruction; and thoſe ſubjects are commonly rejected which require the production of remote authority, or the diſcuſſion of intricate queſtions, as being judged too abſtruſe for ready conception.

The Sermons preached in this country, before and after the Reformation, were often ſo perplexed with ſubtle enquiries, and ſo encumbered with ſcholaſtic learning, that they do not appear to have been calculated for general inſtruction. They were delivered, however, at a time when the doctrines of chriſtianity were more generally canvaſſed than at preſent; when, from prevailing controverſies, all ranks had collected ſome knowledge on the important themes of diſcuſſion; when divinity was the faſhionable ſtudy, and a competent acquaintance with its ſubjects as eſſential to thoſe who would ſhine in ſociety, as to thoſe who would triumph in the ſchools. Wearied with controverſies too far puſhed, and mortified with the diſcovery of the weak-

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neſs of human reaſon, from the frequent failure of its attempts, the preſent age would faſtidiouſly reject all difficult enquiries from public diſcourſes. Admonitions are daily held out the Miniſters of our religion, to ſelect ſubjects of practical importance, to inſiſt, principally, on the moral obligations of religion, and to produce ſuch Sermons as are calculated to make men better. The admonitions are, doubtleſs, grounded on juſt conſideration; and, certainly, no greater criterion of the excellency of a Diſcourſe can be laid down than that it ſhould be contrived to improve the conduct of men. But the direction may be puſhed too far; and Diſcourſes, modelled merely on the plan of communicating practical precepts, would not always produce the deſired effect: and it muſt be maintained, that moral leſſons, however eloquently recommended, or judiciouſly enforced, are not the only, or the greateſt proofs of the utility of a Diſcourſe.

Chriſtianity

Chriſtianity was communicated not ſimply to recommend the virtues, of which experience and reflection might approve the excellency, but to reveal to mankind a deſcription of the divine perfections and attributes: a declaration of his nature and deſigns, as far as they have relation to man's duties; to unfold a wiſe and benevolent plan of redemption, effected by unprecedented means, and connected with new and great conſiderations; to inculcate a morality, not only ſuperior to the deductions of human reaſon, but enforced on new principles and motives, and ſtrengthened by freſh conſiderations, derived from the higheſt ſource, and directed to the nobleſt end.

The practical directions of chriſtianity are ſo plain and obvious, that "he who runs "may read them:" and the preacher who confines himſelf to a repetition of the ſocial duties of men, will be heard with that indifference which ſcarcely attends to acknowledged truths; and which, though it may depart

depart with a cold commendation on the propriety of the leſſon, will be little affected by the detail of firſt principles, and familiar maxims. The intention of public Sermons was not merely to recommend moral precepts for the benefit of the inferior ranks of life, but to communicate, to the general claſſes of ſociety, ſuch information, upon important points, as a well-educated and enlightened Miniſtry is enabled to furniſh; to draw forth the wiſdom of revealed inſtruction from its ſacred ſources; to explain its concealed knowledge; to illuſtrate its remote accounts; to interpret and comment on its figures and parables; to familiariſe what is difficult; to elucidate what is obſcure; to aſſert its doctrines; to vindicate its miracles, and to deſcribe the accompliſhment of its prophecies; to recommend its relations by collateral accounts, and to exhibit its influence by hiſtorical deduction; to detail, in ſimple and unaffected language, ſuch knowledge as enquiry and reflection may procure.

Chriſtianity

Chriſtianity will operate upon the heart in proportion as it ſhall be accepted by the underſtanding. Men do not neglect thepractical laws of religion becauſe they diſpute, or are ignorant of them: they cannot enter the church without ſeeing them inſcribed in large characters; nor can they hear a ſingle leſſon of ſcripture that does not pathetically recommend them: but, generally, they are inſenſible to the influence of religion, becauſe it operates not with the full force of conviction; becauſe their reluctant aſſent is founded rather on acquieſcence than on full perſuaſion; becauſe their faith is built rather on education and habit than on argument and reflection: ſome doubts, from ignorance of the evidence of chriſtianity; ſome heſitation from miſconception of its doctrines, deadens the ſpirit of piety, or weakens the conſtancy of obedience. The ſlighteſt miſt of incredulity that riſes in the mind, is ſufficient gradually to darken the underſtanding, and to corrupt the affections of men: and the preacher, though

though he ſhould " ſpeak with the tongues " of men and of angels," will plead in vain for the excellency of Chriſtian obedience, who has not firſt removed the ſuſpicions that impeach its authority, and the diſtruſt which rejects its ſanctions and claims.

It is not neceſſary, indeed, that the teacher who addreſſes a Chriſtian audience, ſhould be ever labouring to demonſtrate the truth of a religion which has been eſtabliſhed for ages, on unſhaken foundations; that he ſhould excite doubts by endeavours to remove them: but, certainly, it is incumbent on him, occaſionally, to bring forward that foundation of evidence which ſubſtantiates its pretenſions, and on which alone faith can be rationally built. It muſt be uſeful to detail the ſubordinate proofs which may be drawn from a conſideration of its particular relations; it muſt be expedient, likewiſe, ſometimes to refute thoſe idle, or captious objections, which are perpetually raiſed up by fanciful or evil-diſpoſed men; which inſinuate their miſchief into

into every department of ſociety, and which may deceive and miſlead the beſt underſtandings.

Chriſtianity, though it might reſt on the baſis of its own internal excellency, muſt not be deprived of that luſtre which is reflected by its extrinſic proofs, by the demonſtration of its prophetic teſtimonies, and the deſcription of its miraculous ſupport and propagation. Every impreſſive point of evidence which confirms our belief in the truth of religion, diſpoſes us to receive and abide by its inſtructions.

It deſerves ſeriouſly to be conſidered, whether the cry for practical Diſcourſes, and the objections raiſed againſt what are improperly called myſterious Subjects, may not, if carried too far, tend to exclude all points of doctrine from our enquiry, and to reduce chriſtianity to a ſyſtem of ethics.

If the diſquiſitions on myſterious points of faith, as introduced in the Diſcourſes of earlier times, were found to be productive of

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miſchievous effects, it was becauſe they ſubjected, to the diſcuſſion of reaſon, enquiries on which it was not competent to decide. It is now well underſtood, that the myſteries of faith are to be accepted not on the ground of their being compatible with our notions of experience, but becauſe communicated to us by Teachers evidently ſent from God: by Writers confeſſedly inſpired; and it is certainly incumbent on the Miniſters of the Goſpel to inculcate, and inſiſt on the truth of theſe doctrines, that are evidently delivered as the Revelations of God, however ſuperior they may be to the limited conceptions, and narrow experience of mankind; and not to ſhrink from the communication of them, becauſe the popular wiſh ſeems inclined to wave their diſcuſſion, and to recommend, that matters of faith ſhould remain undiſcuſſed, while the moral excellencies of chriſtianity are induſtriouſly diſplayed. A ſilence on the doctrines of Revelation can be vindicated only on a ſuppoſition, that

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points of faith are indifferent, and that the external decorum of a good life is the chief object of attention: a notion frequently propagated under the popular ſentiments, and looſe opinions, of the day. But a diſregard to the principles of faith is a diſregard to the only principles which can enſure, or render praiſe-worthy, the moral conſiſtency of a good life. God muſt reſpect the motives and grounds of mens actions; and will regard, in his deciſions, ſomething beyond the political tendency of human conduct. Practice ever muſt depend on opinions. To diſcard the principles of faith, is to deſtroy the vital ſpirit of religion; to cut up the trunk on which true piety muſt be grafted, and to dry and wither the branches of benevolence and charity to men. If the age is to be indulged in diſcarding doctrines which a ſceptical pride is diſpoſed to reject, and to be flattered into a belief of the ſufficiency of moral virtues, ſome of which are intermingled with, and brighten through the miſconduct

of the worſt of Chriſtians, religion muſt be degraded to the character of an earthly monitor, lifeleſs in its inſtructions, and feeble in its influence. Upon this plan the motives to Chriſtian obedience are torn away; the things of ſcripture hard to be underſtood, and which were inſerted to exerciſe our enquiry: the doctrines which were revealed to elevate the conceptions of faith, and to abate the pride of reaſon, are to be ſhuffled over, or ſuppreſſed as uſeleſs; points which were eſtabliſhed as marks and boundaries of truth, are to be given up and neglected, till the diſciples of a reformed faith are ſeduced by ſectaries, who take advantage of their ignorance; and real difficulties are not attended to till infidels officiouſly obtrude them to ſhake the faith of uninformed men. Chriſt did not ſo proceed, nor did his apoſtles veil over the doctrines of chriſtianity for fear of giving offence to obſtinate or conceited men: leaving the principles of faith, they ſought to go on unto perfection. Let falſhood ſhrink from enquiry,

quiry, and ſuperſtition abate, and recede from its claims; but let chriſtianity, which, at firſt, preſented "ſtumbling-blocks to the Jews, "and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs," ſtill continue to deſpiſe the ſupercilious pride of human wiſdom, and "to bring into captivity every "thought in ſubjection to Chriſt."

Theſe remarks are deſigned to counteract, in ſome degree, the effect of thoſe prevailing ſentiments, with reſpect to the intention of public Diſcourſes, which tend to degrade the importance of preaching, and to leſſen the character of its miniſtry, reducing its members, from teachers of great and intereſting truths, to mere moraliſts. When fairly underſtood they cannot be thought to have any tendency either to revive the ſpirit of uſeleſs controverſy, to recommend the diſcuſſion of abſtruſe and abſtracted ſubjects, or to commend the pedantry and affectation of oſtentatious learning. Whether they may or may not be thought juſt, when applied to Sermons which are to be delivered in public preaching,

it cannot ſurely be diſputed, that Diſcourſes, intended for private peruſal, may be rendered more intereſting by the introduction of ſuch explanatory particulars as are drawn from remote ſources, which are illuſtrative of the primitive faith, and tend to elucidate difficulties of ſerious conſideration. Extraordinary relations, detailed in the hiſtorical parts of ſcripture, ſuch as thoſe of the temptation of Chriſt, of the pool of Bethesda, and of the Dæmoniacs, which, from their remarkable character, make an impreſſion very forcible, and which muſt prove uſeful or prejudicial in proportion as they are underſtood or miſconceived; which are, in themſelves, pregnant with inſtruction, and tend to ſubſtantiate the claims of chriſtianity, appear to be ſubjects extremely proper for full and diffuſive examination, and may be conſidered with more advantage than diſſertations on moral qualities, however elegantly recommended.

Popular Diſcourſes, on theſe and ſimilar ſubjects, are not ſufficiently frequent, ſince the

the difficulties attending them are daily operating on the minds of wavering Chriſtians, and often contribute to ſhake the faith of the uninformed diſciples of Chriſt. Theſe ſubjects then, it was conceived by the Author, required to be fully diſcuſſed: with production of authority, and reference to early opinions. The interpretations of antiquity are not ſo much raiſed above the eye of common attention as to be inconſiſtent with the deſign of theſe Diſcourſes. The ſcholar is not diſpleaſed to find the authorities, which he knows to be important, produced in evidence. He is thereby relieved from the trouble of reſearch, or the neceſſity of acquieſcing with unſupported aſſertion; and the general reader is not inſenſible to the weight conferred by ſuch authorities on the queſtions diſcuſſed. If deep learning be the poſſeſſion of but few, yet the notices and impreſſions of it are very generally diſperſed, and the deductions, or pretended deductions of it, operate very extenſively. The Diſ-

courſe on the Dæmoniacs was particularly deſigned to oppoſe the notion laid down by the learned Dr. Farmer, in his Eſſay on the Dæmoniacs of Scripture; a work in which, undoubtedly, much erudition is perverted and conſtrained, to bend in ſupport of his hypotheſis. The book is popular, and its tendency is miſchievous, ſince it leads to a rejection of the literal ſenſe of ſcripture, and to ſtrengthen the opinion of thoſe whoſe idle and ſtrange miſconceptions would reduce the agency of the apoſtate ſpirit to the operation of an evil principle.

Other ſubjects choſen by the Author, as that of the introductory Diſcourſe, thoſe on the Reſurrection, and on the Influence of Chriſtianity, have been very fully, and very frequently diſcuſſed, in popular Diſcourſes; but whoever reads, with attention, the works of others, muſt occaſionally remark ſome deficiencies, which he will think might be ſupplied; ſome arguments which he muſt conceive might be more ſtrongly urged and enforced.

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The ſubject of the Reſurrection is ſo important, that it cannot be too frequently conſidered; ſince, as Biſhop Pearce has obſerved, it is a point on which the whole weight of chriſtianity reſts. The notion of ſome ſeeming inconſiſtencies in the different relations of this great event, is very prevalent; and though theſe are very ſatisfactorily reconciled, in the judicious and diſtinct deduction of particulars furniſhed by Mr. Weſt, the detail is made at ſome length; and the general reader might not be diſpoſed to follow up the chain of events, as drawn out with diffuſive deſcription, and lengthened by collateral proofs. The Author then conceives, that no apology need be made for the introduction of this ſubject, eſpecially as it conſtitutes a link in that chain of the evidence of chriſtianity which he wiſhed to preſent, by a diſplay of ſome of its miraculous proofs. Dr. Townſon's book, which has recently appeared as a poſthumous work, was not ſeen by the Author till theſe two Diſcourſes were

printed off, or ſome notice might have been taken of theſe ſlight particulars, in which he differs from, and of the ingenious illuſtration, by which he confirms the accounts of Mr. Weſt.

The two Diſcourſes on the Influence of Chriſtianity, will, perhaps, be thought ſuperfluous by thoſe who have read the Sermons, not long ſince written on this ſubject, by the Biſhop of London, the Biſhop of St. David's, and Dr. Coombe; but as the former of theſe writers has well obſerved, "that chriſtianity has been the parent of much miſery, is ſo favourite an argument with all our philoſophical ſceptics, that it is every day dreſſed up in ſome new form, and repeated, inceſſantly, with an air of peculiar triumph and exultation *;" and it may not, therefore, be inexpedient as frequently to counteract the influence of the argument by a fair ſtatement of the hiſtorical truth. Theſe Diſcourſes, however, as well indeed as moſt of thoſe in

* Biſhop Porteus's Sermons, p. 271. Serm. XII.

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the preſent collection, were written, in great part, long ago; though, while they have remained with the Author, they have ſometimes been extended, as the peruſal of other works has ſuggeſted hints.

A view of the preſent ſtate of the world, as illuſtrating the accompliſhment of prophecy, might, it was conceived, be uſeful, if furniſhed in a compendious deſcription; ſince many, it was apprehended, in the preſent day, like Marſhal Wade *, are more likely to be convinced by what they ſee than by what they hear; and will rather aſſent to the truth of prophecy, when they witneſs its accompliſhment, than when they read of the completion of its predictions, however ſtrongly authenticated. That the materials of the Diſcourſe have been chiefly collected from Mede, Sir Iſaac Newton, Biſhop Newton, Lowman, and other commentators, is chearfully acknowledged.

* See dedication prefixed to Biſhop Newton's Diſſertations on the Prophecies.

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The diſſertation on the Millennium, it was thought, might be uſeful, when the attention of mankind is raiſed to the diſpenſations of Providence, by the important revolutions that have recently occurred, with ſuch unprecedented rapidity and effect, and when vague and indiſtinct notions on the ſubject appear very generally to prevail.

The ſubjects of the Diſcourſes collectively conſidered, have, perhaps, more connection than they may, at firſt ſight, appear to have. After the introductory Diſcourſe, which is deſigned to excite thoſe juſt ſentiments of humility, and of reverence for God, which facilitate the attainment of truth in every purſuit, a regular chain of evidence, in defence of chriſtianity, is exhibited in the hiſtorical order of the miracles and reſurrection of Chriſt, of the influence, the preſent proofs, and promiſes as to the future eſtabliſhment of that religion. In a diſcuſſion of religious ſubjects, there is, however, always ſome connexion. No part of chriſtianity

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can be illuſtrated without throwing light on all. Every ſtar that appears, heightens by its rays, the general brilliancy.

The Author has endeavoured to ſelect thoſe ſubjects which he thought might prove moſt important, and to render them as intereſting as he could, by illuſtrating them with ſuch information as is connected with, and tends to explain the theme. If they ſhould be judged of little value themſelves, he hopes that they will be conſidered as a proof of his wiſh to employ that leiſure which he enjoys, uſefully to others; and to fulfil, as far as he can, the object of the Chriſtian miniſtry: the diffuſion of uſeful and important knowledge,

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Whereby the day-ſpring from on high hath viſited us, to give light to them that ſit in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace. - - - - - - - - - 187

DISCOURSE IX.

ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF PROPHECY, AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE WORLD.

2 PETER I. 19.

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We have alſo a more ſure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed. - - - - - - - - - - 219

DISCOURSE X.

ON THE MILLENNIUM, OR REIGN OF SAINTS.

REVEL. XX. 4, 5, 6.

And I ſaw thrones, and they ſat upon them, and judgement was given unto them: and I ſaw the ſouls of them that were beheaded for the witneſs of Jeſus, and for the word of God, and which had not worſhipped the beaſt, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands;

and

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and they lived and reigned with Chriſt a thouſand years. But the reſt of the dead lived not again until the thouſand years were finiſhed: this is the firſt reſurrection. Bleſſed and holy is he that hath part in the firſt reſurrection: on ſuch the ſecond death hath no power, but they ſhall be prieſts of God and of Chriſt, and ſhall reign with him a thouſand years. - - - - - - 267

DIS-

ERRATA.

Page 18, line 22, for *variety*, read *magnificence*.
—— 49, — 17, instead of *hoped*, read *sought*.
—— 107, — 12, after *being joined*, insert *by Salome*.
—— 107, note *, line 2, instead of *we*, read *well as*.
—— 166, line 18, dele *exceedingly*.
—— 175, — 6, instead of *them*, read *men*.
—— 179, — 19, insert *the* before *prophetic*.
—— 201, note †, instead of *Du gloſſar Cange*, read *Ducange Gloſſar*.

DISCOURSE I.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PROSECUTING OUR STUDIES AND ENQUIRIES UNDER RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS, AND WITH A VIEW TO MORAL IMPROVEMENT.

JOB XXXVIII. 4—7.

Where waſt thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou haſt underſtanding. Who hath laid the meaſures thereof, if thou knoweſt? or who hath ſtretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof faſtened? or who laid the corner ſtone thereof; When the morning ſtars ſang together, and all the ſons of God ſhouted for joy?

SUCH are the words which the inſpired writer of the book of Job aſcribes to the Almighty; ſuch is the majeſtic expoſtulation which God himſelf is repreſented to have made, with thoſe who raſhly canvaſſed his

 decrees,

decrees, and preſumptuouſly decided on his judgments. An appeal to the glorious works which God had diſplayed in the creation of the world, was indeed well calculated to illuſtrate the divine attributes, and ſerved moſt effectually to diſcountenance the exultation of human pride. The teſtimonies of his wiſdom and power, to which the Almighty refers, are ſtrikingly expreſſive of thoſe perfections, and cannot but awaken our admiration and regard.

There are indeed no ſubjects on which the mind dwells with more affecting intereſt than on thoſe which lead us to meditate on the powers and excellencies of God; hence it is that the attention of the thinking part of mankind is ſo often employed in conſidering ſeparately, or collectively, the works of the creation; and hence the efforts of induſtry to explore, and the exertions of genius to deſcribe, the ſcenes which ſurround them.

A contemplation of the works of nature, inaſmuch as it excites emotions of admiration, and ſublime enjoyment, is productive of advantage to the human mind, ſince theſe are ſenſations which conſpire with our implanted love of excellence, and elevate the affections

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to an adoration of the ſupreme Being. The advantage, however, will be more conſiderable as we regulate our inquiries on juſt principles; and it ſhall be the object of the preſent diſcourſe, after ſtating the circumſtances under which, in every purſuit, we muſt neceſſarily act, to point out the ſource from whence thoſe juſt principles of thinking may be derived.

Of the impreſſions on the mind, which would be proportionate to the viſible ſplendor of God's works, as diſplayed in the grand objects of creation, we can form no adequate apprehenſion, ſince the effect of their firſt appearance is produced under unfavourable circumſtances. Theſe objects being preſented to the mind before the judgment can exerciſe its powers, are adverted to only as they affect immediate ſenſations, of which the memory retains no recollection. Enlarged experience, it is true, may open freſh objects in nature, and the contemplation of theſe ſeldom fails to excite emotions affecting and important. But theſe objects, however great, are but different combinations of materials, of which the mind muſt have previouſly formed ſome conception from ſmaller repreſentation. He

to whom the ocean firſt opens its expanſe, has at leaſt heard of its waves, and beheld the accumulation of agitated waters on a ſmaller ſcale. If the mountain rear its ſummit in ſudden magnificence to the clouds, he has before marked the elevation of the hill, and therefore receives only inadequate ſenſations from a ſecondary impreſſion. He that ſurveys the dark extent of the foreſt, or purſues the river in its courſe which ſpreadeth fertility in the valley, may admire indeed the grandeur or the beauty of the ſcene, but he will admire them only as a more perfect repreſentation of objects already familiar to his imagination.

If farther we advert to the effect produced on minds, matured by experience and reflection, when, by the attainment of a new ſenſe, any of the chief objects of creation are firſt diſcovered, as when, for inſtance, the films of natural blindneſs are removed, and the eye of manhood is firſt opened to the day, we ſhall obſerve, that however rapturous may be the enjoyment, the full and adequate effect is not produced. If the eye hath been cloſed, the ear hath not been ſhut. He who ſtrained in vain to find that light which hath enlivened

livened the companions who ſurround him, hath at leaſt felt the warmth of its rays; his mind hath been prepared by deſcription, faint though it may have been, to expect ſome great diſcovery of unknown perfection. The powers of fancy have been ſtretched to form, from the combination of ideas elſewhere acquired, ſome conception of ſuperior excellence; add likewiſe, that the eye hath, with cautious conſideration, been expoſed gradually to the admiſſion of light in its fainter degrees. It hath not, with inſtantaneous enjoyment, beheld the enlivening diffuſion of its ſplendor, nor hath been dazzled to ſecond blindneſs by the diſplay of the glorious luminary from which that ſplendor is derived. Of the full and adequate effect therefore, which might be produced on rational minds, by the firſt diſcovery of the grand objects of nature, we can form no true judgment, becauſe no mind, matured to reflection, exiſts ſo uninformed as to receive impreſſions from them intirely new.

Acquainted with the works of God before we have learnt to appreciate their importance, we in general contemplate the features of creation with indifference. Objects ſtamped

with obvious marks of divine contrivance, are overlooked in habitual neglect. How few are they, who in the ordinary courſe of life reflect on the order and excellent ſtructure of the bodies which ſurround them, on the relative proportions and entire harmony with which they are formed, on the rules which they obſerve, and the principles on which they act. Even the regular arrangement of day and night, the ſucceſſion of the ſeaſons, and the periodical return of the heavenly bodies, are, to the generality of mankind, the ſubject but of caſual remark. Some deviation from cuſtomary order, or expected event, muſt awaken thought, ſome fears for perſonal ſecurity muſt rouſe attention, or otherwiſe the daily wonders of God's providence are unheeded; not when due and ſufficient ſuſtenance is diſtributed to every earthly creature, but when the drought prevails, and vegetation drops, do we call to mind that it is God who ſendeth fertility by his ſhowers, that it is he who "cauſeth it to rain on the earth, to "ſatisfy the deſolate and waſte ground, and "to cauſe the bud of the tender herb to ſpring "forth." Let the lightnings of the Almighty go forth, and his thunder roll abroad:

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let the earth ſhake with trembling and convulſive agitation, and all, in the apprehenſion of inſtantaneous danger, will call for protection on him whoſe providence, in the milder diſpenſations of his power, they have diſregarded.

It is the privilege and the happineſs of thoſe who ſeclude themſelves for occaſional reflection, to raiſe their attention from that negligence into which it is apt to ſink, to arreſt and bring back the thoughts to objects of daily obſervation, to examine and reflect on ſuch as are moſt pregnant with inſtruction. The enjoyment of ſuch reflections is conſiderable, the advantage derived from them in proportion to the intelligence which we poſſeſs concerning the conſtitution and qualities of the objects with which we are concerned. Of this pleaſure all are ſuſceptible; excite but the attention, and all are intereſted. Shew to the peaſant the plant on which he has trodden with indifference, and he will ſee and acknowledge the perfection of its ſtructure. Why has he not noticed that perfection before? not becauſe he was leſs acquainted with its internal arrangement, its botanical diſtinctions, its efficacies and its powers, for of theſe we may ſuppoſe him

ſtill ignorant, attentive only to the fragrance, the form, or the colours of the plant; but becauſe he has walked through his daily path without thought, and looked around him on ſcenes too familiar for particular conſideration.

Men of more improved minds are ſtill more diſpoſed by the information which they poſſeſs to advert with profit to thoſe hints which remind them of the wonders of the creation. In thoſe repreſentations which are furniſhed by the imitative arts, they are often excited to admire objects and ſcenery, which, in their original exiſtence, they have paſſed unnoticed. In viewing theſe repreſentations, they remark not merely the fidelity of the copy, and the ſkill of the artiſt in the arrangement of his ſubject, but they recall to mind likewiſe the real intereſt of the things deſcribed, and are pleaſed at the diſcovery as well of tranſient beauties to which art hath given permanency, as of inherent properties, on which they have often glanced an heedleſs and unconcerned regard.

The relations of the traveller, and the paintings of the poet, in their moſt ſimple and unexaggerated deſcriptions, never fail to awaken

awaken a pleaſing and uſeful recollection of ſcenes familiar to the mind, though thoſe ſcenes had previouſly impreſſed no deep trace, nor produced any moral conſideration.

From theſe reflections it is evident that the works of the creation are, in fact, infinitely more glorious than they appear to be; that they are ſeen by us under thoſe circumſtances and diſadvantages which obſcure their true character and intrinſic ſplendor; that, in proportion as our attention is fixed upon them, their luſtre brightens, and their excellencies become more conſpicuous, as to the ſtedfaſt and perſevering eye, the ſtars in the firmament emerge and multiply, or as to the ſtudious and conſiderate mind, the ſublimity and wiſdom of God's diſpenſations become more manifeſt and clear. It is the province of the moraliſt to awaken ſuch attention, and to avail himſelf of thoſe ſenſations with which we are naturally moved at the diſcovery of any freſh proof of God's wiſdom or power. It is his duty to point out the attributes of the Creator in the perfection of his works. The benevolence of him who would inſtruct mankind in juſt apprehenſions of the Almighty, cannot be more ſucceſsfully employed

ployed than in dilating on thoſe arguments which may be drawn from a contemplation of the ſeveral parts of creation. In this the ſacred writers are eminently great and inſtructive. In the plain and unaffected account of the firſt formation of the world, with which Moſes opens the inſpired book, how ſublimely are the attributes of God diſplayed! In the vivid deſcriptions of the Pſalmiſt, what praiſes and what thankſgivings are conveyed *!

The great and glorious works which God hath created, and the ſtudies which contribute to illuſtrate their nature and perfection, then excite juſt and proper ſentiments in the mind, when they awaken religious affections. The awful leſſons which are to be deduced from the contemplation of material objects, are tranſcribed, as we have obſerved in the inſtructive pages of the ſacred volume. The viſible world is there depicted in a moral and religious light, and the attributes of God

* See, for inſtance, the ſublime and admirable deſcription of God's perfections, as illuſtrated in his works, which is contained in the 104th Pſalm. From ſo animated a picture what object can we ſelect in preference?

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are pourtrayed in the animated repreſentation of his works. This then is the primary ſource of inſtruction, and as the mirror or the lake, it will reflect the ſcenes of nature with new colours and enlivened imagery. It is no barren admiration which will reſult from ſuch attention to the works of nature, or to the ſacred commentary: hence will ſpring not merely the conviction of the exiſtence of an all-wiſe and all-powerful God, which every careleſs remark, or accidental thought, muſt ſuggeſt; but a lively ſenſe of his perfections, a firm confidence in his preſence and protection, an holy reverence for, and deſire to imitate his diſcovered excellencies, an anxious and ſteady zeal to attain to that approved innocence from which we have fallen, that declared reſemblance to our Creator which conſtituted the original character of man.

In proof of this we may obſerve, that they who have moſt deeply ſtudied the character and principles of God's created works, have been ever moſt ſincerely impreſſed with a ſenſe of his glory, moſt inclined to bow to his revealed inſtructions, and moſt ſolicitous to practiſe his laws. It may farther be remarked as probable, that thoſe who, in a future

future life, will be admitted to a nearer contemplation of the divine perfections, will derive no inconſiderable enjoyment from beholding the emanations of his glory, as diſplayed in the grandeur of his works, as illuſtrated by the diſcovery of ſecret relations and latent excellencies, as manifeſted in the great deſign and final purpoſe of every dependent ſcene.

But if the ſacred writings depict, in lively colours, the intereſting ſcenery of the viſible world, they open an inſtructive diſplay of a more glorious and important œconomy, in the manifeſtation of a ſpiritual ſyſtem, which irradiates the material world, as the ſoul of man beams through his corporeal frame. The revelation of the great ſcheme of redemption, from its firſt dawnings to its full ſplendor in the advent of Chriſt; the gradual accompliſhment of the ſucceſſive declarations of prophecy, of its promiſes and threats; the completion of its types, and the departure of its ceremonial figures before the preſence of things typified; the hiſtory of the incarnation and lowly birth of Chriſt, proclaimed alſo "as good tidings of great "joy" by the multitude of the heavenly hoſt.

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The deſcription of the miniſtry, miracles, and inſtructions, of the ſufferings and crucifixion of the Lord and Redeemer of mankind; the teſtimony of his reſurrection and aſcenſion into heaven; the aſſurance of the reſtoration of mankind, and of the conſummation of all things in the judgment and diſpenſations of a future life, as detailed with inſpired confidence, and unſhaken ſincerity, by the ſacred writers, furniſh ſubject for the moſt ſublime and inſtructive contemplations. They are themſelves the nobleſt themes; and they enable us to aſcertain the value of every other ſubject: they point out the ſources of knowledge, and teach us how to obtain it. The riſe alſo and progreſs of religion; its ſmall beginning and rapid advancement; its miraculous ſucceſs in oppoſition to human powers, and more than earthly adverſaries; its eſtabliſhment and propagation amidſt civilized nations, and in unenlightened countries; its intrinſic excellencies practically demonſtrated; its mild influence and beneficial effects, under different circumſtances, and in different times, conſtitute topics of intereſting and inſtructive diſcuſſion, and lead to the diſco-

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very of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs to mankind.

On the principles which religion communicates, and under the influence of inſpired ſentiments, ſhould every human purſuit be conducted. If we ſeek for knowledge upon any lower motive, we toil and labour for unproductive recompence. "We ſow as it "were to the wind, and ſhall reap the whirl-"wind." He who pants for that information which he may diſplay with oſtentation to others, aſpires to what can confer no permanent ſatisfaction, which, inſtead of reverence, will often excite envy and diſguſt, and which, while it enlightens the mind, effects not a correſpondent improvement of the heart, which delights to triumph in the depreſſion of others, and to ridicule rather than to remove the ignorance over which it exults.

He alſo who proſecutes his ſtudies with indiſcriminate and uncontrolled eagerneſs after various knowledge, on abſtruſe ſubjects, without regard to their utility, or reſpect to the weakneſs of the human underſtanding, will range with too excurſive fancy over

over fields where he will cull no profit; inſtead of following that humble and ſober ſpirit which it is the intereſt of man to obſerve, which is the guide to knowledge, and the pledge of ſafety, he will be led on by a daring and adventurous preſumption till loſt in errors, and overſhadowed by darkneſs, he will ſink in fatal and unavailing deſpair.

Such are the truths which obſervation may derive from experience; and we need only appeal in confirmation to the writings of thoſe who have deſerted an uſeful and unerring light for the viſionary and unſteady meteors of their own imagination. What have they who have embarked in ſearch of remote and metaphyſical diſcoveries, obtained but chearleſs opinions and dreary proſpects? What have they offered to mankind but barren and endleſs ſpeculations, but principles that weaken the obligations, deſtroy the comfort, and undermine the hopes of mankind? Much time hath been miſ-ſpent but to "darken counſel by words without know-"ledge," and great talents miſemployed but to generate idle diſcuſſions and irkſome controverſies; what bitterneſs likewiſe has been provoked by a pertinacious adherence to no-

tions that pride hath generated, and error cheriſhed! What weakneſs hath been betrayed by evaſive deſertion of principles too unſtable for defence, of which the propagation has effected miſchief that ſubſequent retraction cannot counteract, and for which tardy repentance can ſcarce atone!

The precepts of revelation were furniſhed to aſſiſt mankind in every ſalutary and becoming purſuit. They teach us with what motives to cultivate improvement, they ſeek to inflame us with the deſire of rendering ourſelves more acceptable to the Deity, and more worthy to partake of eternal happineſs. If we walk under the direction of that light which they hold out, we ſhall be led to contemplate, like the ſhepherds of Bethlehem, divine wiſdom inveloped in human form, to worſhip God, and to reverence his glorious nature, though cloathed in ſimplicity, or preſented under cuſtomary and familiar objects.

Religion, upon ſubjects moſt important to man, conveys every information which is eſſential to the direction of his conduct. If we adhere to the inſtructions of this great Teacher, we ſhall be ſecure from thoſe preſumptuous and ſhallow theories which have

have been ſucceſſively raiſed and ſucceſſively deſtroyed. How many have been the fanciful ſyſtems concerning the origin of the world, built on baſeleſs foundations by thoſe who knew not, or rejected the accounts of ſcripture. Erected on principles of popular philoſophy, and recommended with popular eloquence, they have dazzled the imagination for awhile, and been received as if their authors had been preſent "when the foun-"dations of the earth were laid;" diſtorted relations have been forced to give teſtimony to each ſpecious hypotheſis, till juſter accounts, and more faithful obſervation, have diſpelled the deceitful ſchemes, and have brought back, with the light of true philoſophy, the authentic documents of revealed hiſtory.

In the inveſtigation of the ſeparate works of nature, they who have detailed its features, and analyzed its parts, have never queſtioned the perfection of the contrivance without diſplaying their own ignorance. The chaſms which haſty pride would point out, the defects which preſumptuous criticiſm would expoſe, have been found, on examination, to be imaginary and fictitious. Deeper reſearch,

and more accurate ſtudy, hath developed the relative propriety of every part, the entire and conſiſtent excellence of all. The difficulties likewiſe that have been excited in oppoſition to accepted doctrines of religion, drawn from wild and metaphyſical diſcuſſion, not to mention the futility of their character, have been refuted even upon their own ground, and by their own weapons. But whatever force and validity may have been aſcribed to ſceptical objections, they can have no pretenſions to be liſtened to in oppoſition to the ſure word of inſpired inſtruction.

He who in exalted ſtudies extends his contemplations beyond the boundaries of the earth, and conſiders the heavens, and the ſyſtems which they contain; whoſe imagination is raiſed by meditation on the aſcertained proportions and acknowledged immenſity of the heavenly bodies; who diſcovers ſyſtem beyond ſyſtem, and conſtellations multiplied with unbounded variety, will not, if he judge by the light of revelation, ſuppoſe this to be the reſult of caſual production, or fortuitous combination, but with the greateſt and moſt enlightened of mankind, as well as with the inſpired

inſpired writers, he will perceive, in the endleſs multitude of the heavenly hoſt, an arrangement of infinite wiſdom and of infinite power. Taught to conſider the diſtinct and ſeparate importance of the world in which he breathes, and from which he diſtantly contemplates other created works, he will not ſuffer his admiration of larger bodies to leſſen his belief in the dignity of that nature, for the ſalvation of which the Creator of the univerſe yielded up his only and beloved Son. If other beings, if Seraphim and Cherubim be more exalted, if unknown eſſences be leſs diſtant from the perfection of the ſupreme Being, his comparative inferiority hath ſtill the intrinſic worth of a ſpiritual nature, breathed into us by God himſelf.

He who conſiders the condition of his own body, the excellent proportion of its parts, the entire harmony of its frame, the organization of its nerves, and the perceptive power of its ſenſes, will acknowledge therein the contrivance of a divine Creator, and, with the pious and conſiderate David, confeſs that "he is "fearfully and wonderfully made *." If he

* Pſ. cxxxix. 14.

reflect on the intimate union of the body with the ſoul, its ready obedience to its ſuggeſtions, its inexplicable power of conveying ſenſations to it, he will find no difficulty in believing, that though its excellent ſtructure ſhould be diſſolved, and its members moulder into duſt, yet that the Almighty can, with the ſame power by which he firſt formed, re-aſſemble and unite its ſcattered parts, and raiſe up the ſame body to the judgment of eternal life.

If farther he ſhould meditate on the perfections of that mind which now exiſts in intimate conjunction with his body; if he conſider its faculties, and the excellent endowments of which it is ſuſceptible, he will find no difficulty in conceiving that it is conſtructed for the inheritance of eternal life, and well calculated for the enjoyment of the divine preſence; he will think that it is neceſſary gradually to prepare it for ſuch enjoyment, to ſtore it with ſuch knowledge as may meliorate its affections, raiſe its aſpiring thoughts, and be productive of fruits acceptable and fragrant to God, eſteeming all attainments valuable only as they contribute to that purpoſe.

Acting

Acting under ſuch impreſſions, the diſciple of Chriſt will derive profit from every circumſtance and ſcene of life. He will underſtand, that every condition, proſperous or afflicted, may be rendered ſubſervient to the attainment of God's favour. He will conſider this world as a ſchool in which his obedience is to be proved, his virtues diſciplined, his recompence to be earned. If he occaſionally retreat, it will be to ſtrengthen his faith and good reſolutions, by prayer and holy meditation; when he mingles with ſociety, he will ſeek, by a conſtant exerciſe of ſocial and benevolent affections, to encourage the exertion of that charity which he is enjoined by Chriſt to cultivate. He will conduct every purſuit under ſtrong impreſſions of God's attributes, and with a becoming diffidence in his own powers. As the face of nature is unveiled to his reſearch, and as the volume of inſpiration is explained to his underſtanding, they will excite juſt affections, and diſcloſe uſeful and important knowledge. The features of the divine perfection, as diſplayed in the natural or intellectual world, cannot be revealed without awakening praiſe, and the deſire of humble imitation. The mind

when opened to receive true wiſdom, becomes enlarged in its views; familiarized with excellency, it moulds itſelf in conformity to its pattern, and aſſumes a reſemblance of its character. In proportion as the underſtanding is improved, it becomes more ſuſceptible of genuine and permanent pleaſures, and more diſpoſed for the enjoyment of eternal recompence. As we conſult therefore our eſſential and laſting intereſts, we ſhall cultivate thoſe qualities which, while on earth they flouriſh, conciliate God's favour, and which will hereafter be permitted to unfold their maturer excellencies, unto the glorious manifeſtation of the divine preſence.

DISCOURSE II.

ON THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

MATT. IV. 4.

But he anſwered and ſaid, It is written, Man ſhall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

SUCH was the appoſite and ſufficient anſwer of Chriſt to the tempter, who had in vain endeavoured to ſeduce his conſtancy. It appears, that our great Teacher, who deſigned in all things to preſent us with an example of perfect and exalted righteouſneſs, did, in obedience to the ſuggeſtions of that ſpirit, which had viſibly deſcended on him at his baptiſm, immediately withdraw himſelf from the public ſcenes of life, that he might manifeſt the ſelf-denial which he profeſſed, encounter the temptations which he came to vanquiſh, and fortify himſelf to ſupport

thoſe afflictions which he willingly ſubmitted, in the execution of his miniſtry, to endure.

In conſidering the conduct of our Saviour, we are to contemplate him as acting in the union of the divine and human character. To the attributes and perfections of God were conjoined the paſſions and infirmities of man. Capable, at all times, of exerting thoſe divine powers which were inſeparably annexed to his perſon, he appears to have occaſionally ſubmitted to their ſuſpenſion *. The divine and the human nature of Chriſt being intimately united, the relation of his conduct might be expected to delineate a two-fold character. The attributes and perfections of God muſt burſt forth in rays of glory. The reality of the manhood muſt be proved by the wants and frailties of the fleſh.

* Irenæus's Her. L. III. c. xx. p. 250. Edit. Grabe. At our Lord's paſſion alſo there was a ſuſpenſion of the operation of the divine nature. Luke xxii. 53. At his temptation and crucifixion, and at the beginning and concluſion of his miniſtry, he appears in his unſupported human character to have been aſſailed by the power of the prince of darkneſs under a voluntary relinquiſhment of his divine agency, and to a full demonſtration that the devil "had nothing in him." See John xiv.

The

The life of an incarnate God could only be the deſcription of miraculous powers and human ſufferings, ſometimes blended, ſometimes ſeparately detailed, as conjointly they were manifeſted, or individually exerted and ſuſtained.

Conſiſtently with this theory, the ſacred writers pourtray the mingled features of perfect God and perfect man, deſcribing actions ſometimes without diſcrimination of their appropriate reference to either character, and developing the excellencies of the divine, and the integrity of the human nature, in conſiſtency with the ſcope and deſign of their ſeveral relations *.

* The words and actions attributed by the evangeliſts to Chriſt, are ſuch as could only be conſiſtent with the double character which he aſſumed. Some are obviouſly characteriſtic of God, and ſome appropriate to, and deſcriptive of man. The ſacred writers treat of them without diſcrimination, in the ſame manner as we ſpeak of the exertions of men, without thinking it neceſſary to ſpecify that the mental exertions proceed from the mind, or the corporeal actions from the body; and from a collective examination of the general conduct of our Lord, as repreſented in ſcripture; of his words apparently inconſiſtent, and his actions ſeemingly incongruous, the moſt irreſiſtible evidence of his two-fold nature may be derived.

During

During the period which preceded the public miniſtration of Chriſt, the authority and excellence of the godhead were not often manifeſted, unleſs indeed in the diſplay of extraordinary virtues, and in the indications of early and unprecedented wiſdom. When his commiſſion was ratified by that voice from heaven, which pronounced him to be the "well-beloved Son of God, in whom he "was well pleaſed," he prepared in ſolitude to demonſtrate himſelf worthy of that approbation which he had received. Appointed to defeat the powers of darkneſs, he ſignalized the commencement of his miniſtry by a perſonal triumph over their apoſtate leader, and prince.

From the account of St. Luke and St. Mark, we collect, that after Jeſus had been led by the ſpirit into the wilderneſs, and, previouſly to that temptation of which we are about to conſider the particulars, he was forty days expoſed to temptations, of which the circumſtances are ſuppreſſed, as too numerous for conciſe report *, or as leſs im-

* Origen ſuppoſes, that the ſcripture omitted the account of temptations in the wilderneſs more in number than the world could have contained. Homil. xxix. in Lucam. John xxi. 25. Lightfoot.

portant

portant for us to know, becauſe perhaps peculiar to the character and condition of Chriſt.

The wilderneſs in which Chriſt diſplayed his firſt triumph, was, probably, the wilderneſs of Judea, which is deſcribed by travellers as a mountainous, rude, and cheerleſs ſolitude *; a ſcene far different from the paradiſe in which the firſt Adam had yielded to the ſeduction of the tempter. St. Mark tells us, that he was with the beaſts of the field, abiding there in the ſecurity of that innocence which Eliphaz deſcribes as "laughing at deſtruction and famine, and "as not afraid of the beaſts of the earth †." Here then, remote from ſocial intercourſe, and without the means even of partial ſuſtenance, our Saviour firſt exerted his ſupernatural powers, and faſted miraculouſly forty days.

The conſtitution of the human frame, which, by an admirable arrangement, derives

* Adjacent to this wilderneſs is a mountain of ſteep and dangerous aſcent, which is called Quarantania, in reference to our Saviour's faſt of forty days; and the tradition of the country reports it to be the mountain on which Chriſt experienced his third temptation. See Maundrel's Journey to Jeruſalem, p. 79.

† See Mark i. 13. Job v. 22, 23.

its

its ſupport from a due ſupply of food, cannot, we know, long ſuſtain its vigor, and exerciſe its functions, without its accuſtomed ſuſtenance. The body of our Saviour, therefore, which was regulated by the ſame œconomy, could not have preſerved its energies, during ſo long an abſtinence, without the operation of a divine power. And as Moſes and Elias had faſted forty days, it might have furniſhed ſubject for invidious compariſon, to thoſe who were diſpoſed to cavil, if Chriſt had abſtained for a ſhorter period.

At the expiration of this time, when the miraculous influence which counteracted the infirmities of the fleſh, was withdrawn, our Saviour conſented, for our example, to act in the character of man, which he had deigned to take into the godhead, and to be tempted under the ſame circumſtances in which human nature is expoſed to temptation. That when he had faſted forty days and forty nights, he ſubmitted to feel the wants of human nature, we are poſitively told; he conſented to ſuffer as a man, unſupported but by righteous motives, and experienced the keen pangs of hunger, feeling, doubtleſs, that ſolicitude which human nature muſt feel for their removal.

removal *. Then it was that the great adverſary of mankind, whoſe terrors muſt have been excited by the circumſtances that diſtinguiſhed the appearance of Chriſt, came unto him, with deſign, probably, to diſcover whether he were that promiſed ſeed who ſhould effect his deſtruction, that expected Meſſiah whom ſucceſſive prophets foretold, and to whoſe arrival he muſt have looked forward with anxious apprehenſion and diſmay.

If, as we have reaſon to believe, the intimations of divine mercy were obſcure, even to "the principalities and powers in "heaven," and the full extent of the prophetic promiſes concealed from the angels of light, till they witneſſed the commencement of their accompliſhment in the birth of Chriſt †, we need not wonder that the devil ſhould have been ignorant of the preciſe time at which the Saviour of mankind

* Origen obſerves, that the reaſon why St. John does not mention the temptation of Chriſt is, becauſe he treats principally of his divine nature, and Chriſt as God could not be tempted; but St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, who diſcourſe chiefly of his human nature, all ſpeak of the temptation. Homil. 29. in Lucam.

† 1 Pet. i. 12. Epheſ. iii. 10.

ſhould

ſhould be born, or that he ſhould be unſuſpicious that the infallible perfections of an incarnate God were veiled under the human perſon of Jeſus *. The heavenly hoſt, it is true, had announced his birth as of a Saviour, a Meſſiah, and Lord; and the voice of God, at his baptiſm, had proclaimed him as his well-beloved Son. Yet ſtill the fallen ſpirit, unenlightened to comprehend the two-fold character of Chriſt, or impatient in reſtleſs ſolicitude for farther proofs of his authority, might infatuately preſume to flatter himſelf, that the approved Miniſter of God being afflicted with hunger, was aſſailable by his arts. In deluſion, however, or in deſpair, he, who had revolted from the omnipotence of the Father, approached, if it were poſſible to deceive the wiſdom of the Son, or at leaſt to terminate the anxieties of doubt, by receiving the conviction of his approaching defeat.

* Ignatius's Epiſt. ad Epheſ. § 19. Ignatius ſuppoſes the virginity of Mary, the character of her Son, and his death, which he calls the three ſounding myſteries, to have been concealed from the Prince of this world; and Origen approves and confirms the opinion. Vide Homil. 6. in Lucam.

And

And when the tempter came to him, he ſaid, "If thou be the Son of God, com-"mand that theſe ſtones be made bread." Thus, by a taunting intimation, which conveyed a doubt of the reality of that character which had been conferred on Chriſt, the wily and inſidious counſellor endeavoured to provoke our Saviour to a demonſtration of his divine power, ſuggeſting, at the ſame time, the means of relieving that hunger which he ſuffered. Chriſt, however, whoſe wiſdom no artifice could deceive, and whoſe appetites were ſubjected in ſubſerviency to the laws of righteouſneſs, inſtantly replied, "It is written, man ſhall not live by bread "alone, but by every word that proceedeth "out of the mouth of God." By this well adapted anſwer, our Redeemer, who ſpake as never man yet ſpake, indirectly pointed out the folly of that advice, which would prompt him to act inconſiſtently with his character; for if, indeed, he were the Son of God, it was eſpecially incumbent on him as ſuch, to act in obedience to thoſe laws which God had revealed. He appealed to the authority of thoſe ſacred writings which contained the acknowledged words of the Almighty,

mighty, as to the eſtabliſhed rule of man's conduct. "It is written", ſays he, "man ſhall "not live by bread alone, but by every word "that proceedeth out of the mouth of "God." It is written in the infallible page of God's law, that man's ſupport depends not ſo much on corporeal ſuſtenance as on an obſervance of God's precepts and inſtructions.

The paſſage alluded to by our Saviour, is contained in the 8th chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, on referring to which we find, that Moſes, when exhorting the people to obedience, in a commemorative detail of God's mercies, reminded them, that "when "the Lord had led them forty years in the "wilderneſs, to prove the ſincerity of their "attachment, he had ſuffered them to "hunger, and fed them with manna, that "he might make them know, that man "doth not live by bread alone, but by every "word (or, as in the original * it ſtands, by every thing) "that proceedeth out of the "mouth of the Lord doth man live," that

* In the Hebrew text it is not every word, but every thing. The Chaldee verſion renders it every thing that proceedeth from the mouth of God. Our Saviour has fixed the ſenſe.

he

he might teach them their dependance on his will, and that the preſervation of man reſts alone on the abſolute and uncontrolled power of God.

In contemplating the conduct of our Saviour upon this occaſion, we perceive it to be perfectly conſiſtent with the character which he had aſſumed, of God taking upon him the human nature, and exhibiting a pattern for the imitation of mankind. As God, he evinced the ſuperiority of his divine nature, by ſupporting, during ſo long an abſtinence, an unimpaired and unaltered frame, and by defeating that power by which the world had been vanquiſhed. As a man, he reſiſted every temptation by which his paſſions were aſſailed, and profeſſed obedience to that inſtruction which was addreſſed to him as man *. As a miniſter of the Lord, he diſplayed unſubdued conſtancy; with ſubmiſſion to the Father, he liſtened only to his word; with benevolence to mankind, he allowed himſelf to be tempted in the ſame circumſtances under which man

* It is written, "man" ſhall not live by bread alone. The anſwer would have been nugatory if Chriſt had not ſpoken as a man.

muſt be tempted, that in the ſympathy of ſimilar ſufferings he might experience what man feels, and afford ſuitable help to us when we are tempted; "For in that he "himſelf hath ſuffered being tempted, he "is able to ſuccour them that are tempted*."

Foiled and diſappointed in his deſign, the devil muſt have perceived the wiſdom of the rebuke, and have apprehended from whence it came. Unable to reſiſt the efficacy of the reply, he ſought not to urge the argument, but proceeded, by varying the temptation, to aſſail our Saviour on a different ground, and to witneſs, after repeated trials, the aſcendancy of heavenly wiſdom, and the ſad aſſurance of his own defeat. With fatal conviction, he at length experienced that no inducement, no contrivance, could betray the Son of man to a momentary forgetfulneſs of his exalted duties, or ſeduce him into the ſlighteſt conceſſion to the powers of darkneſs.

We, for whoſe inſtruction the eventful hiſtory of Chriſt is recorded, learn, from the relation here propoſed to our reflections, that retirement, abſtinence, and ſelf-denial, are obli-

* Heb. ii. 17, 18. See alſo Heb. iv. 15.

gations

gations impoſed on the diſciple of Chriſt, and contribute to enable him to ſuſtain thoſe trials and temptations which he muſt encounter in his progreſs through life. Admitted by baptiſm to the ſervice of that God who "chaſteneth whom he loveth," we are taught to expect temptations in our warfare, and ſhould "count it all joy to fall "into them *, that we may be thereby diſciplined to the perfection of the ſervants of Chriſt, and evince our unſhaken confidence in his word.

The appointed means whereby we muſt qualify ourſelves to ſupport trials and temptations are, a ſerious application to the inſpired writings, a faithful diſcharge of reli-

* James i. 2. Heb. xii. 10, 11. The paſſages which encourage us to rejoice in thoſe general temptations for trial and improvement, which are repreſented as ſalutary and affectionate diſpenſations of God, are not inconſiſtent with our Saviour's direction to us, to pray with becoming diſtruſt in ourſelves againſt the ſeveral temptations which might endanger our faith; that God would not ſuffer us to be led into temptations in which we might be overpowered; or, in other words, that he would not remove thoſe reſtrictions by which our adverſary is circumſcribed, or withdraw from us that grace by which we are enabled to reſiſt his attacks. See Matt. vi. 13. Chap. xxvi. 41. and Whitby.

gious offices, and a frequent application for divine aſſiſtance in that inſtituted ſacrament by which God's grace is conveyed.

When Chriſt retired to the ſecluſion of the wilderneſs, it was, doubtleſs, for the purpoſes of ſecret prayer and holy meditation. It was to return, however, with renewed vigor and animated exertion to the active offices of his miniſtry; and the aſcetick piety, which in after-times retreated to the deſert, or to the cloiſter, failed in its imitation of Chriſt, by neglecting the object after it had effected the preparation. The temptations likewiſe over which we are to triumph, are to be encountered not only in ſolitude and ſequeſtered privacy, but alſo in the public ſcenes and ſocial intercourſe of life.

When our Lord faſted, it was not to mortify corrupt affections, or to reſtrain rebellious paſſions, for ſuch the ſubdued purity and perfection of his nature * diſclaimed, but it was, by his own example, to recommend the propriety of occaſional reſtriction and forbearance; it was to teach us ſometimes to forego the cuſtomary indulgencies of life, that we might

* John xiv. 30.

thereby demonſtrate the diſpoſition to reſign ought that interferes with religious obedience, or adminiſters to the corruption of our nature. That by partial abſtinence, we might confirm the habits of general reſtraint, liberate the mind from ſubjection to the body, and keep the paſſions in temperate obedience to reaſon, enlightened by revealed law.

In conſiſtency with the ſame views, he approved, in precept, of that faſting which is the reſult of ſincere humility and contrite affliction of the ſoul *. While his cenſures were levelled againſt the phariſaical hypocriſy of ſorrow, and condemned the affectation of meritorious ſervices, he uniformly commended that ſpirit which exhibits a conſcious ſenſe of its own unworthineſs, which ſubmits to voluntary abaſement and ſelf-denial, and obſerves ſuch reſtrictions as facilitate the exerciſe of pure and unclouded piety. When Chriſt faſted forty days, he exceeded, as in every other inſtance of miraculous and exalted piety, the limits and extent of human imitation. He however thereby, furniſhed occaſion for the obſervance of a ſtated period, which,

* Matt. vi. 16, 17.

without ſuperſtition, and in conformity to the early practice of the church *, may be conſecrated to a more ſtrict and vigilant performance of religious offices.

If the duties of ſelf-denial and abſtinence have been undervalued in the preſent age, it is becauſe the relaxed temper of the times is impatient of ſalutary reſtraint. The laws of chriſtianity are not, however, to be ſacrificed in compliance with the paſſions of corrupted men; ſtill muſt it be maintained, as it ſtill will be experienced, that he who adopts the diſcipline of primitive chriſtianity at this ſeaſon, will derive from thence a ſalutary amendment, and find that abſtinence, when not carried to rigorous and ſuperſtitious exceſs, when undebaſed by trivial refinements, and when conjoined, as in the excellency of the Chriſtian character, with prayer and charity, muſt operate to the improvement of our nature, and tend moſt effectually to conciliate the divine favour. That national calamities have been averted by public humiliation, we know as well from profane as from ſacred hiſtory; and that individual puniſh-

* Can. Apoſt. 69.

ments

ments may be avoided, by a ſubmiſſive and repentant ſorrow, we have the poſitive aſſurance of God's word.

Of the benefits that muſt accrue from occaſional retirement for reflection and ſelf-examination, for the peruſal of revealed inſtruction, for prayer, and a performance of religious offices, of the advantage that muſt reſult from theſe, none can be ignorant who are appriſed of the frailties of human nature, or reflect on the condition and expectations of man. If, as ſoldiers of Chriſt, we would take up the ſhield of faith, and the helmet of ſalvation *; if, like him, we would wield the ſword of the ſpirit, that we may ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil, we muſt firſt fortify ourſelves by private ſupplication, and by watching thereunto with all perſeverance †; ſo ſhall we be ſtrengthened, like him, to baffle the ſuggeſtions of the tempter, and to reſiſt the impulſes of intemperate paſſions. He who, like Chriſt, is baptized but to conſecrate his life to God's ſervice, will refuſe, however prompted by external or by inward ſolicitations, to yield in compliance to unlawful views. The ſharp

* Epheſ. vi. 16, 17. † Epheſ. vi. 18.

and urgent preſſure of neceſſity will not drive him to adopt, any deſperate or unlawful meaſures for relief. To the evil ſpirit, who ſhall ſuggeſt that he hath the power and opportunity of removing his diſtreſs, and that the means, though irregular, are at hand, he will reply by an appeal to thoſe ſacred oracles which prohibit a diſtruſt in God's providence, and teach a ſubmiſſion to his will; which inculcate an abhorrence of all fraudulent or preſumptuous practices, and enjoin an unreſerved and implicit obedience to that word which hath the promiſe of eternal life.

To the evil ſuggeſtion which prompts to a preſumptuous reliance on God's favour, and which, with perverted application of ſcripture, would lead to provoke him, by doubting the demonſtrations of his power and preſence, and by requiring farther evidence than he has vouchſafed to give, he will produce the uncorrupted word of God's wiſdom *. Should the proſpect of unbounded profit be diſplayed as the proffered reward of his bowing down to evil, he will, with in-

* See Whitby on Matt. iv. 7.

dignation,

dignation, reject the bribe, conſcious, that if a man ſhould gain the whole world, and loſe his ſoul, he has bartered for the price of miſery; and that as he cannot ſerve two maſters, he muſt worſhip the Lord his God, who has an excluſive claim to his adoration and obedience.

Such were the convictions, as far as they had reference to an uncreated being, which ſtrengthened our Maſter, who is in heaven, firmly to repel the attacks of that enemy whom he bruiſed. Such were the conſiderations which encouraged his diſciples to wreſtle againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places *, to wander, like him, deſtitute and afflicted, to ſupport labours, ſtripes and impriſonment, in journeyings often †, in perils of waters, in foreign and domeſtic dangers, in wearineſs and painfulneſs, in watchings often, in hunger and thirſt, in faſtings often, in cold and nakedneſs, in inceſſant cares for the churches which they planted; as apoſtles and martyrs for the propagation of the faith which they had received.

* Epheſ. vi. 12. † 2 Cor. xi. 26—28.

The

The ſame conſiderations ſhould likewiſe animate us to a lively and uniform obedience. No views of preſent gratification, no ſeduction of ſenſual pleaſure ſhould be ſuffered to interfere with the high purpoſe and deſign of our exiſtence. No circumſtances of preſent affliction ſhould tempt us to forſake the patient and perſevering ſubmiſſion which we owe to the divine will. Neither tribulation, nor diſtreſs, nor perſecution, nor famine, nor nakedneſs, nor peril, nor the ſword, ſince the ſufferings of this preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us. Where the temptations are ſtrong, and the fleſh is weak, there, if we ſeek, ſhall we obtain aſſiſtance from him, who in all things was tempted like as we, yet without ſin. However powerful the enemy with whom we contend, God, if we ſeriouſly incline to him, and ſolicit his grace againſt the evil crafts and aſſaults of the devil, will ſhield us from danger; for "God is faithful," ſays the apoſtle, "and will not ſuffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will, with the temptation alſo, make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it:" ſo that by the ſucceſsful trial of our faith,

faith, we may be found worthy of the inheritance of that crown which is prepared for thoſe who live and die in the Lord.

DISCOURSE III.

ON THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

JOHN v. 6—9.

When Jeſus ſaw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that caſe, he ſaith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man anſwered him, Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming another ſteppeth down before me. Jeſus ſaith unto him, Riſe, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked.

THE circumſtances of the miracle above related are of very peculiar and important conſideration. The account, as more fully given by the evangeliſt, is intereſting, not only from the principal ſubject and event which it deſcribes, but from ſome particulars

lars referred to, as it were, incidentally. It is the character of ſacred hiſtory to involve, in its conciſe relations, many ſummary points of a ſtriking and inſtructive nature, which, however connected with the main purport and deſign, are to be conſidered as having a ſeparate and intrinſic value. In the account of St. John here alluded to, the ſlight mention which is made of the pool of Betheſda muſt ſuggeſt to our reflection much ſubject for ſerious enquiry; and the concluſions which may be drawn from an examination of this ſubject, muſt tend to confirm the authority of other remarkable relations in ſcripture. It is the effect of truth to be correſpondent in all its parts. The grace of conſiſtency brightens through every page of ſacred hiſtory. If it be ſeen in the entire and connected harmony of the plan, it likewiſe often burſts with unexpected luſtre from its minute and caſual reports.

The hiſtory of the miracle which is now to be conſidered, in its firſt aſpect, bears teſtimony to the accounts which are given in the Old Teſtament, of God's miraculous government of the Hebrew nation. It leads us likewiſe to conclude, that the open and

viſible

viſible effects of his immediate interference had not ceaſed when the miniſtry of our Saviour commenced; for let us hear the relation by St. John, writing in the ſpirit, and in the terms of an hiſtorian, who lived in the time of which he ſpeaks. "After this," ſays the evangeliſt, "there was a feaſt of the Jews, and Jeſus went up to Jeruſalem. Now there is at Jeruſalem, by the ſheep market, a pool, which is called, in the Hebrew tongue, Bethesda, having five porches; in theſe lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water; for an angel went down, at a certain ſeaſon, into the pool, and troubled the water; whoſoever then firſt, after the troubling of the water, ſtepped in, was made whole of whatſoever diſeaſe he had."

The account is very remarkable; and admitting it, as we neceſſarily muſt, to be indiſputably true, we cannot deny that the hand of Providence was, at this time, viſibly and miraculouſly diſplayed in frequent manifeſtation to the Jews. The relation, indeed, has been ſometimes ſuppoſed to admit of two interpretations, founded on the ambiguity of

the word tranſlated angel, which may imply either a celeſtial, or an human meſſenger; whence ſome have ſtrangely imagined, that it imports here, ſimply an human agent, deputed by the high prieſt, or council of the Jews, who ſtirred the pool, into which might be thrown the entrails of beaſts ſacrificed *, and other things, which they conceive might communicate a ſalutary influence to the water. But it cannot eaſily be admitted, that any ordinary means could impart ſuch powers to water, as to render it inſtantaneouſly efficacious to the removal of all diſorders. Whereas, in the pool deſcribed by the evangeliſt, the water was univerſally efficacious, though definite and reſtricted as to its extent; a limitation made, doubtleſs, with deſign to keep alive a conſtant ſenſe of God's providence, and to prevent any reliance on the water as in itſelf operative. The effects of the pool were not therefore

* Hammond on chap. v. of John. Theophyl. p. 623. Edit. Par. Chryſoſt. c. xiii. 32. The entrails of the beaſts ſacrificed were not waſhed in this pool, but in an apartment of the temple, called Conclave Lavantium. Vide Cod. Middo c. v. b. iii. and if they had been waſhed in it, what virtues could they poſſeſs or excite?

derived

derived from any inherent principles, mineral or medicinal; nor from any ſanative properties infuſed into the water by natural means. Frequent and ſalutary are the ſprings that flow, with availing power, in various parts of the earth. By the ſecret chymiſtry of nature, are prepared waters that iſſue around us with abundant and enlivening influence, but each has its ſpecific limited effects, and is impregnated with principles favourable, or noxious, as well, or ill applied. That which ſhall brace the ſinews of weakneſs, will, perhaps, accelerate the conſumption of decline; and that which can purify the corrupted veins of diſeaſe, may derange and darken the brightneſs of the intellectual power. As well might Naaman have hoped for relief from the rivers of Damaſcus, as the diſordered individual apply to ſtreams, not empowered by Providence, to operate againſt his peculiar maladies.

In the account here conſidered, we cannot ſuppoſe, that only particular infirmities were healed, or that the agitation of the waters did, by any natural means, ſerve to promote their influence; for the relation ſtates, in unreſtrained terms, and with a preciſion, that

in ſcripture will admit of no qualified interpretation, that whoſoever firſt, after the troubling of the water, ſtepped in, was made whole of whatſoever diſeaſe he had. If, then, as is moſt reaſonable, we ſuppoſe that the water was miraculouſly deſigned to operate by its effects in the moſt diſtinguiſhed manner; and farther, in conſiſtency with the general ſtyle of ſcripture, underſtand, by the angel, a divine meſſenger, expreſsly delegated for the beneficial purpoſe of conveying that miraculous power *, we muſt immediately acknowledge, that a conſpicuous demonſtration of divine providence was daily made for the ſeaſon † of the paſſover, at leaſt to the

* Some think, that no viſible angel appeared, but that a miraculous effect being produced, an angel was ſuppoſed, agreeably to the Jewiſh notions, to be the agent.

† Whitby, after St. Chryſoſtom, is of opinion, that this effect of the pool was experienced only during a ſeaſon κατὰ Καιρον, and, probably, at the time of the paſſover. If this be admitted, it will furniſh an additional preſumption, that the virtue was miraculouſly imparted to the water. No expreſſion correſpondent to "a cer-"tain ſeaſon" was to be found in three Latin copies ſpoken of by Calmet; nor is there any thing equivalent to the words in the Coptic and other verſions. See Whitby and Pearce.

Jews;

Jews; and we perceive a conſiſtency in the divine proceedings, as deſcribed by ſucceſſive hiſtorians of different views, by prophets and evangeliſts, by Hebrew and Chriſtian writers.

The Hebrew nation being immediately ſubjected to the divine government, a diſplay of the eſpecial interference of God was frequently and conſiſtently made. Public miracles were performed by appointed agents and prophets; divine inſtruction was communicated by human organs, and viſible actions were executed by angels and heavenly miniſters. Accuſtomed to theſe manifeſtations of God's actual interpoſition, the Jews witneſſed them without amazement, and ſometimes with indifference. Even in the early periods of their hiſtory, we find them heedleſs, and unconcerned at the tokens of God's immediate attention to them; or, at leaſt, if rouſed occaſionally by their portentous diſplay, ſoon forgetful of their deſign and intention. Even when the thunder which announced the divine preſence awakened fears, or the acknowledged evidence of a divine commiſſion excited reſpect to God's agents, the effect was tranſient. Though the long line of the

prophets had finiſhed above three centuries before the preaching of the Baptiſt, and though the oracular inſtructions conveyed by the Urim and Thummim, and the miraculous fire that conſumed the ſacrifices, had probably ceaſed long before the birth of Chriſt, yet, from the particulars introduced in the evangelical account, which ſuggeſted theſe remarks, as well as from other parts of ſcripture, there is reaſon to ſuppoſe, that the open diſplay of God's agency had not terminated; and it is probable, that the effect produced by our Saviour's miracles would have been more conſiderable if manifeſted to a people who had been unaccuſtomed to the ſight of ſupernatural works. If, we may ſay, in imitation of Chriſt's general reproach againſt the blind obſtinacy of the Jews, "If "the works which were done in Jeruſalem "had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they "would have repented in ſackcloth and "aſhes." If Jeſus healed the ſick, the prophets had done the ſame; not like him, indeed, in the prerogative of their own power; but perverſeneſs ſeldom attends to circumſtance. If Jeſus had raiſed the dead, Elijah had reſtored the widow's ſon; and even

even the bones of Eliſha had revived him who was buried in his ſepulchre *. It required diſcrimination and judgment to reflect, that Chriſt performed miracles in his own name, and with the manifeſtation of a divine power, aſſumed authority that God only could claim.

St. John is the only evangeliſt who deſcribes the miraculous circumſtances of the pool of Bethesda †, (or of the houſe of mercy, which the word ſignifies); and we may therefore not unfairly preſume, that ſuch, or ſimilar effects of God's power, were not uncommon. St. John himſelf mentions them only caſually, as connected with the hiſtory of the miracle which he relates; and other ſacred writers omit them, with many other important circumſtances, which the volumes of the word would not contain. St. John ſpeaks of the pool of Bethesda ſlightly, as a place well known, as a particular of contemporary exiſtence, of which enquiry might

* 2 Kings xiii. 21.

† St. John, who dilates particularly on the proofs of Chriſt's divine nature, was the evangeliſt from whom ſo ſtrong a demonſtration of that divine nature might moſt naturally be expected.

aſcertain the truth, and involves its deſcription with the circumſtances of a miracle which muſt have been judged untrue, if any aſſertion relative to it had been found fictitious; and no reaſonable doubt can be entertained of the communication of ſuch miraculous powers to the pool, though they ſhould not appear to be mentioned by any other * than the ſacred writers.

* 2 Kings xviii. 17. Nehem. iii. 15. Joſephus, indeed, ſpeaks of two pools or baths, under the term Κολυμβηθρα, uſed by St. John, one of which was in, or near Jeruſalem, the other in the city, and, by ſome, ſuppoſed to be that of Bethesda. Bell. Jud. L. V. c. iii. § 2. and Lib. V. c. iv. § 2. It ſhould be remembered, however, that Joſephus either never wrote the full account of Jeruſalem and its walls, which he promiſed, and in which a deſcription of Bethesda might have been expected; or if he did, the work is loſt. The hiſtorian might, indeed, have deſignedly omitted to deſcribe the pool, as it would have naturally led him to ſpeak of a miracle of Chriſt. Tertullian ſays, that the pool of Bethesda, which, till the advent of Chriſt, cured diſorders, ceaſed its bleſſings when the Jews perſiſted in the obſtinacy of their madneſs in blaſpheming the name of our Lord. Tertull. cont. Jud. c. xiii. and therefore it was, perhaps, no longer extant, or operative, in the time of Joſephus. The reputed pool was ſhewn at Jeruſalem when Maundrell was there. See Maundrell's Journey, p. 107.

If,

If, now, we reflect on the particulars of the miracle itſelf, we are naturally led to a conſideration of many intereſting circumſtances. It was the glorious privilege of Chriſt to manifeſt his divine commiſſion, by a diſplay of attributes as beneficial in their influence as they were exalted in their character. To human apprehenſions it was acceptable and attractive, that the perfections of God ſhould be veiled under human virtues; and the excellency of uncreated goodneſs was ſhadowed out in intelligible features, when exemplified in circumſtances familiar to obſervation. Yet lowly and tempered, as was the majeſty of Chriſt under earthly form and circumſtances, the work of redemption, by him diſplayed, was not leſs deſcriptive of divine power and goodneſs than the firſt creation of man. The ſame omnipotent word, which diſperſed the darkneſs from the face of the earth, was equally exerted in ſcattering the intellectual darkneſs which prevailed at the appearance of Chriſt, and in introducing the dawn of that light which gradually brightened into perfect day. The ſame uncontrolled command, which eſtabliſhed a firmament in the midſt of the

waters, dividing the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament, diſplayed its efficacy with equal praiſe when it founded a firm and immoveable religion, which ſhould be the boundary between exalted righteouſneſs and the floods of wickedneſs, and on which the powers and activity of the ſoul ſhould be employed with adequate induſtry, and with effect, correſpondent to the exertions of our bodily powers on the material world. The ſame ſpirit which moved upon the face of the waters, and gathered them into one collected maſs, rolling by appointed laws, and governed by eſtabliſhed influence, exhibited its exiſting omnipotence in the perſon of Chriſt, when he commanded the ſtormy waves to ceaſe, and they were ſilent, according to his word. Shall we continue the parallel, and remember, that when God ſaid, "Let the earth bring forth graſs, the "herb yielding ſeed, and the fruit tree yield-"ing fruit after his kind, whoſe ſeed is in "itſelf," he ſhewed a part only of the ſame benevolent wiſdom, which, when diſplayed, with counterpart effect, in the perſon of Chriſt, commanded and inſtructed the immaterial world,

world, that it might bring forth its fruits, and teem, with productive fulneſs, which ſhould ſwell under the divine influence, and be refreſhed by the divine grace, which ſhould offer up the fragrance of its productions to that heavenly light that called forth and enlivened their growth. Did the lights that at the firſt creation were placed in the firmament, to divide the day from the night, and that were to be for ſigns and for ſeaſons, and for days and for years, more evince the operation of a divine power than did the appointment of thoſe ſelected miniſters who were commiſſioned to ſeparate the darkneſs of paganiſm from the light of chriſtianity; who ſhould ſpread wide the glory of their effulgence; who ſhould be for ſigns and demonſtrations of the divine goodneſs; whoſe memorials ſhould be regiſtered in records of celebration, and whoſe example ſhould be ſet on high for the admiration and direction of mankind? If, laſtly, God had created man in his own image, and breathed into his noſtrils the breath of life, Chriſt evinced his participation of the ſame power when he raiſed up the lifeleſs frame, and re-

called

called to it the animation of that ſpirit which had expired and departed.

Of the inefficacy of human art to reſtore that which hath periſhed, we all feel, and muſt acknowledge, the conviction. After ages of reſearch, and after accumulation of ſucceſſive remark; after all that can be learnt from the collected deductions of experience, we can as yet but alleviate, upon uncertain principles, a few of thoſe diſorders which weaken the frame, and ſap the conſtitution of man. We may caſually prolong the flame of life, and perchance, by judicious application, invigorate the ſinews of declining ſtrength. But ſlow are the means, and precarious is the ſucceſs. To Chriſt only, and to the appointed miniſters of God, did it belong, by a word, to brace the withered frame, to revive the deadened ſenſe, and to re-eſtabliſh the powers of intellect deranged.

Let us mark the teſtimonies of a heavenly power in the circumſtances of the miracle that demands our preſent attention. Let us contemplate the affecting ſpectacle of a man afflicted with an infirmity of eight and thirty years, exhauſted by continued ſufferings, and harraſſed, for a long time, by repeated diſappointment

pointment of obtaining that relief which was daily ſnatched from his reach, by ſome more fortunate competitor. See him within a few yards of that ſuccour which no friendly hand would aſſiſt him to procure, and, with our Saviour, we muſt compaſſionate his impotent attempts to enter the troubled pool. Thus, helpleſs and wretched, he was peculiarly an object to engage the attention of that God who conſiders the unſupported; and "when "Jeſus ſaw him lie, and knew that he had "been now a long time in that caſe, he "ſaith unto him, Wilt thou be made "whole?" Under ſuch circumſtances, to be aſked if he would be made whole, was to hear words thrilling and awakening indeed to the ears of miſery, long unaccuſtomed to the voice of ſuccour, to the offers of conſolation. It was to hear ſounds that muſt have pierced to his very ſoul. He, however, in a tone of no impatience, related his ſimple and intereſting caſe, deſcribing himſelf at the brink of the healthful water, baffled, in reiterated attempts, with no man to aſſiſt him in his helpleſs ſtate. And inſtantly, as not ſlow to mercy, "Jeſus ſaith unto him, Riſe, take up thy bed, and walk." Speaking then

as

as one having authority, and not as the ſcribes, in a tone of power uncircumſcribed by human limits, uncontrolled by earthly laws, and enjoining to the ſufferer a conduct which ſhould bear a public and ſtriking teſtimony of the mercy which he had received, commanding him to prove his recovered ſtrength, by carrying that which had ſupported his weak and recumbent limbs. In conformity to the command, the man immediately was made whole from a diſorder, which, in its confirmed ſtate, admits of no cure from human aſſiſtance *.

Was not ſuch a miracle ſo wrought a ſufficient teſtimony of the truth of Chriſt's pretenſions? Could ought but a divine word operate a cure ſo inſtantaneous and effectual? It is deſcribed, by the evangeliſt, with the utmoſt ſimplicity. Such it might have been conceived was a work, that if men had "held their peace, the very ſtones would "have cried out." But what ſaid the Jews to a miracle ſo ſtupendous? In the ſpirit of

* Vide Bartholin. de Paralytic, M. VIII. L. vii. p. 338. It is probable, that the diſorder ſtyled by St. John ασθενεια, was a confirmed paralyſis. See Matt. ix. 6. where the ſame direction is given to a paralytic.

perverſe

perverſe and childiſh obſervation, they overlooked the greatneſs of the work, and cavilled, with petty objection, at its circumſtances.

Many of Chriſt's benevolent miracles were performed publicly on the ſabbath-day, as if expreſsly to intimate, that it ſhould be diſtinguiſhed by deeds of mercy, and that the day conſecrated to God ſhould be marked with the proofs of benevolence to man. The ſabbath was that day which the Jews hallowed with well founded admiration, but with a ſuperſtitious obſervance, prejudicial to, and ſubverſive of that ſpirit of religion, which God's commandment was intended to excite. To their haſty objections, that his conduct was illegal *, the reſtored paralytic anſwered, that he who had made him whole, had commanded him to take up his bed and walk, not doubting that he who could perform ſuch a miracle had ſufficient authority to juſtify a departure from the ſtrict obſervance of the ſabbath. The Jews, more eager to condemn than to praiſe and admire, enquired of him, "What man is that which ſaid unto "thee, Take up thy bed and walk?" But

* Nehem. xiii. 19. Jerem. xvii. 21, 22.

he

he that was healed could not then gratify their ill-directed curioſity, for "he wiſt not who it was," ſince Jeſus had conveyed himſelf away from the multitude, ſeeking the conviction of reflection, and not the murmurs of popular applauſe.

The miracles of Chriſt were deſigned chiefly to promote the ſpiritual benefit of mankind. This was as effectually conſulted in the cure of one diſordered perſon, placed in ſuch helpleſs circumſtances, as it could have been, had he extended his aſſiſtance to others, who, probably, waited at the pool for the time when they ſhould profit by the appointed means of recovery. Attentive farther to the higher intereſts of him whom he had thus ſignally ſerved, and knowing that the mind, when rouſed by great events, and ſoftened to gratitude, by experienced mercies, was rendered ſuſceptible of good impreſſions, Chriſt ſaid unto him in the temple, where Jeſus, with accuſtomed piety, and the paralytic, with awakened gratitude, repaired, "Behold, thou art made whole, "ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing come unto "thee."

It

It is not neceſſary, from this exhortation, to ſuppoſe, that the patient had been thus afflicted, in conſequence of any extraordinary ſins, though our Saviour, to whom the ſecret tranſactions of every man were known, might poſſibly allude to ſome previous miſconduct that might have produced, or at leaſt merited the puniſhment that it received. In any caſe it was conſiſtent with his benevolent ſpirit to inculcate that general reformation which might avert the divine wrath.

The man, collecting from the excellency of the admonition, or from the impreſſive appearance of our Saviour that he was Jeſus, the prophet of Nazareth, departed, and told the Jews that it was Jeſus that had made him whole, " and therefore did the Jews perſecute Jeſus, and ſought to ſlay him, becauſe he had done thoſe things on the ſabbath day. But Jeſus anſwered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." To theſe, and ſuch like purpoſes, does my Father, which is in heaven, and who gave this law, co-operate, and by his power and authority do I work. " Therefore the Jews ſought the more to kill him, becauſe," in their eſtimation, " he had not only broken the ſabbath,

bath, but ſaid alſo, that God was his Father*, making himſelf equal with God." From this it appears, that the Jews underſtood the nature of Chriſt's pretenſions, and the importance of the character which he aſſumed. They were aware, that he who ſo emphatically ſtyled God his Father, did make himſelf equal in majeſty to God; and Jeſus, confirming their apprehenſions, ſaid, "Verily, "verily, I ſay unto you, the Son can do no-"thing of himſelf but what he ſeeth the "Father do; for what things ſoever he doth, "thoſe alſo doth the Son likewiſe; for the "Father loveth the Son, and ſheweth him "all things that himſelf doth." That is, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, and partaking of his nature, could do nothing of himſelf but what he knew to be conſiſtent with the Father's work. As the Son, he acted in unity and invariable agreement with the Father. In conformity of action, as from coincidence of will, for the Father loveth the Son. In correſpondence of views, as the

* In a peculiar manner his Father, as the expreſſion imports Πατερα ιδιον ελεγε τον Θεον, comp. with Rom. viii. 32. Matt. xxvi. 63—65. John x. 35—38. Hence did the Jews, for this aſſumption, accuſe him of blaſphemy.

Son

Son witneſſeth the deſigns of the Father, who ſheweth him all things that he doth; "and he will ſhew him," adds our Saviour, "greater works than theſe, that ye may "marvel." He will diſplay higher attributes of the godhead in the perſon of the Son, which may excite the admiration of the world. For as the Father raiſeth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even ſo the Son quickeneth whom he will. Even the great and excluſive power of God *, that of reſtoring the departed ſpirit, and of raiſing up the lifeleſs frame, even that doth the Son partake with equal and undivided authority; and ſtill farther, the right of judging all men is aſſigned as the peculiar and diſtinguiſhed privilege of the Son, who died in atonement for the ſins of mankind, and whoſe friendly and merciful regard for their intereſts muſt render him the moſt acceptable Judge; "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath "committed all judgment unto the Son, "that all men ſhould honour the Son even "as they honour the Father. He that "honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the "Father which hath ſent him."

* Deut. xxxii. 39. 1 Sam. ii. 6. Rom. iv. 17.

Suffice it thus to have ſhewn, by an appeal to one of thoſe works which bear witneſs of Chriſt, that he was verily, and indeed, the appointed Meſſenger of God. Suffice it to have maintained, that the miracle of Bethesda furniſhed a glorious teſtimony of the divine character of Chriſt; that, in oppoſition to thoſe who have had recourſe to myſtical and allegorical expoſition, its literal interpretation reflects glory on God's government; and laſtly, ſuffice it to have inſiſted, from the words of Chriſt, that he who could not deceive, and who diſplayed the powers of the Father, thought it not robbery to lay claim to equal honor with the Father.

DISCOURSE IV.

ON THE DÆMONIACS.

MATT. VIII. 31, 32.

So the devils beſought him, ſaying, If thou caſt us out, ſuffer us to go away into the herd of ſwine. And he ſaid unto them, Go: and when they were come out, they went into the herd of ſwine; and behold, the whole herd of ſwine ran violently down a ſteep place into the ſea, and periſhed in the waters.

THE above relation conſtitutes part of an account of a very remarkable miracle performed by our Saviour; an account that has much intereſted attention, and which, however it may have been miſtaken or miſrepreſented, contains, like all other parts of ſacred hiſtory, much that redounds to the praiſe and glory of God.

In a conſideration, however, of the ſcripture relations, it is often neceſſary to advert to contemporary circumſtances, and deliberately to reflect on the important deſigns of God in communicating a revelation by his Son. It appears, that our Saviour, in the execution of his benevolent miniſtry, when employed in healing the diſeaſed, and in counteracting the various afflictions to which mankind were expoſed, did particularly manifeſt his power and his mercy in delivering thoſe who were poſſeſſed of evil ſpirits; but on no occaſion did he more expreſsly demonſtrate his divine attributes than in the performance of that miracle of which we are about to examine the circumſtances, after we ſhall have taken a view of ſome particulars which may tend to illuſtrate the account.

It may be collected from many paſſages, both in the Old * and New Teſtament †, that previouſly to the creation of the world,

* Gen. iii. 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Job i. 6, 7. Zechar. iii. 1—3. Iſaiah xiv. 12—15.

† 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude vi. 1 John iii. 8. Rev. i. ii. 7—9. Epheſ. ii. 2. iv. 27. 1 Theſſ. ii. 18. Rev. xx. 2. James ii. 19. 1 Tim. iii. 6. Origen Περι αρχων, L. I. c. vi.

ſome

ſome ſuperior being, who had departed from his obedience to the Almighty, had been condemned with theſe aſſociate ſpirits, who had been ſeduced to a ſimilar miſconduct, to depart from the preſence of God, and to forfeit that glorious felicity which he had enjoyed, for a ſtate of guilty diſquietude and miſery. Concerning the motives and circumſtances of this diſobedience the ſacred writers have furniſhed us with no information; and no ſatisfactory intelligence can be derived from the early traditions, or the mythological fables, which repreſent a created being to have revolted in bold and extravagant defiance of omnipotence. It is certain only from the unqueſtionable accounts of revelation, that ſuch degraded ſpirit did exiſt; that he directed his early malevolence againſt man, the created object of God's favour; and that, from the time that Adam yielded to the ſeductions of the tempter, his deſcendants became more obnoxious to the attacks of their great enemy.

The title by which this apoſtate ſpirit is uſually deſcribed in ſcripture is, that of ſatan, or the devil, which words, if not appropriate to, are emphatically applied to the great

adverſary of mankind *. This evil ſpirit appears to be ſuffered by the Almighty to poſſeſs a reſtricted influence over human affairs. Thus far, ſays the divine permiſſion, ſhalt thou go, and exert dominion over thoſe who have voluntarily ſubmitted to thy ſway. And ſubject to the limitations laid down by that God, "who formeth the light and "createth darkneſs, who maketh peace and "createth evil," who allots the circumſtances and regulates the temptations of men †, the devil may be conſidered as the immediate cauſe and inſtigator of that moral and intellectual evil that darkens the word.

That this evil power is controlled and circumſcribed within certain boundaries, we learn from the hiſtory of Job's temptation: "Behold," ſaith the Lord, "he is in thine

* 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Job i. 6. Matt. iv. 1. xii. 26. xxv. 41. Luke x. 18. John xiii. 2. Acts v. 3. xiii. 10. 2 Cor. xi. 14. Epheſ. vi. 11. 1 Theſſ. ii. 18. James iv. 7. 1 Pet. v. 8. Jude 9. Rev. xii. 9. xx. 2. Juſtin Martyr, Apol. I. p. 46. Dial. II. p. 309, 310, 360. Edit. Thirlb.

† The ſcripture condemns the notion of an independent principle of evil. Iſaiah xlv. 7. 1 Cor. xx. 13.

"hand,

" hand, but ſave his life:" and Satan went forth from the preſence of the Lord to exerciſe only a reſtricted power. But however reſtricted, and however circumſcribed, the ſad proofs of his prevailing influence were too fatally experienced in the wickedneſs and rebellious crimes which domineered in the earth. Hence it was that they who enjoyed not the light of revelation, and who were anxious, by the glimmerings of reaſon and tradition, to comprehend the diſpenſations which they witneſſed, and to underſtand the nature of man, were involved in difficulties which they could not ſolve, and harraſſed by contradictions which they could not explain. Hence it was, that when they beheld the excellency of that reaſon which occaſionally broke out from amidſt the corruptions of a faded nature, and contemplated amidſt the benevolent diſpenſations of God, the triumph and aſcendancy of the powers of darkneſs, they attributed ſuch apparent inconſiſtencies to the exiſtence of a good and of an evil principle; ſo far miſtaken in their notion as they fancied them of equal and independent power, and mutually engaged in defeating and in counteracting the operation of each

other, and uninſtructed to diſcern that the exiſtence of evil was a conſequence of the lapſe of man, and permitted only to an extent compatible with the benevolent deſigns of God, and the ultimate welfare of mankind.

As the period of our Saviour's preſence drew near, the power of the evil ſpirit was demonſtrated with ſtill greater effect, and ſerved to exhibit the neceſſity for the coming of that Lord who ſhould "bruiſe the ſerpent's head." If in the ambitious conteſts, and in the unreſtrained depravity; if in the luſts, the falſhood and oppreſſion of the heathen world; if in the ambiguous prevarications of the Pagan oracles *, in the groſs deluſions of Gentile theology, and the ſuperſtitious ignorance of the Gentile worſhip; if in theſe the agency of Satan was ſhewn, his power was manifeſted only in a leſs degree among the Jews, who had experienced the peculiar attention of the Almighty †; and the perverſe and idolatrous diſpoſitions, the rebellious obſtinacy of this people, as well as the corruption introduced into the doctrines of their

* Limborch's Theolog. Chriſt. L. V. c. 35.

† 1 Kings xxii. 20, 21. 2 Chron. xviii. 19—21.

religion,

religion, illuſtrated, in ſtriking characters, the activity of an evil power.

But for the more conſpicuous demonſtration of the Meſſiah's glory, and for the puniſhment of the wickedneſs of the Jews, and other nations, of which the meaſure was now filled up, the direct influence of Satan was frequently and fully ſhewn before the advent of our Lord. It appears, from many writers, ſacred and profane, that the devils were ſuffered to maintain an open control over the perſons of men, and that the effects of their power were ſubjected to the external ſenſes and obſervation of mankind. Many ancient Heathen writers mention dæmoniacs* as perſons actually poſſeſſed by evil ſpirits, which ſpirits the Heathens ſuppoſed to be the ſhades or ſouls of wicked men departed

* Æſchylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, ſpeak of dæmoniacs. In the days of Herodotus, inſanity was ſuppoſed ſometimes to proceed from poſſeſſion. L. VI. c. 84. and in the time of Hippocrates, epilepſy was attributed to the ſame cauſe. Vide de Morb. Sacr. Dæmonology was a part of the Pythagorean and Platonic philoſophy. Vide Plut. de Placit. Philol. Lib. V. c. 1. Cicero de Divin. L. I. § 5. c. 82, 87. All antiquity, indeed, believed in poſſeſſions, except the followers of Democritus, and the Sadducees among the Jews.

from

from this life; or beings of celeſtial origin, and of a rank intermediate between gods and men *. Joſephus ſpeaks of dæmons, and aſcribes to David † and Solomon the power of caſting them out; and ſays, when treating of Solomon, that the devils, by him ejected, were the ſpirits of evil men ‡.

From the accounts of this hiſtorian, it is evident that the abſolute preſence of ſome

* Plato Sympos, p. 327. Among the different ſorts of dæmons, of which the Heathens believed the exiſtence, they ſuppoſed ſome to be of an origin ſuperior to that of the human race, and worſhipped them with fearful deprecation. Vide Apuleius de Deo Socrat. p. 686, 687. Edit. Delph. Plutarch de Placit. Philoſ. L. I. c. viii. de Defect. Orac. p. 431. Tom. II. Edit. Par. Lactantius tells us, that Triſmegiſtus called dæmons evil angels, aware that they had been celeſtial beings. Mede maintains, that the Heathen theologiſts admitted the exiſtence of a kind of dæmons more high and ſublime than thoſe which had been the ſouls of men; dæmons who were from the beginning, or without beginning, always the ſame, and whom he ſuppoſes to anſwer to the ſpiritual powers which we call angels. B. III. c. iv. 1 Cor. viii. 5.

† Antiq. L. VI. c. viii. § 2. c. xi. § 2. L. VIII. c. ii. § 5. Lib. VII. c. vi. § 3. Matt. xii. 27. Hieron. in Loc.

‡ Joſephus attributes the ſame power likewiſe to Eleazar, a contemporary, whom he repreſents to have ejected a devil in the preſence of Veſpaſian, by uſing the name of Solomon, and ſome charms.

malig-

malignant being was ſuppoſed; and whatever notions the Jews in general might have entertained as to the nature of theſe dæmons, it is unqueſtionable that they believed in their actual exiſtence.

But farther, there are ample grounds to maintain, that the Jews *, as well as all other nations, had ſome apprehenſion of a ſuperior order of ſpiritual beings, who interfered with malignant enmity in the concerns of mankind. Their great and ſacred hiſtorian had recorded the ſucceſsful contrivance of the firſt ſeducer to ſin; and their inſpired prophets predicted the defeat of the powers of darkneſs; when, therefore, they reflected on the aſcendancy of that evil, which, through ſucceſſive ages, had prevailed; when they beheld the fierceneſs and uncontrollable violence of the dæmons who poſſeſſed their

* Job i. and ii. 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Zechar. iii. 1—3. 2 Kings xxiii. 5. The Jews conſidered all diſeaſes as derived from the agency of a ſpiritual being, acting in ſubſerviency to God. See Farmer's Eſſay on the Dæmoniacs. Lightfoot on Luke xiii. 11, 16. Hammond on John vii. 20. See alſo Iſaiah xiv. 12, 14. Though this paſſage relates only to the king of Babylon, there is an alluſion to the fall of ſatan in the expreſſion.

country-

countrymen, it is probable that they often entertained conceptions of higher ſpirits than thoſe which had been releaſed from earthly bodies: however, they might imagine that human ſouls, of a depraved character, were employed likewiſe in tormenting mankind *; and there is no ſufficient reaſon to conclude, that when they ſpoke of Beelzebub, and his angels, and the prince of the devils, they meant to deſcribe the ſhades of men †; but

* Calmet Dict. Art. Demon. Grotius on Matt. viii. 28.

† Farmer, after Jurieu, imagines Beelzebub to have been the ſame as Pluto, and would lead us to ſuppoſe, that the Jews conſidered him as the prince of evil ſpirits; but Pluto was the ruler of the infernal ſpirits in general; and if the Jews borrowed the title of an Heathen deity, why ſhould they be ſuppoſed to have uſed it in a more reſtricted ſenſe than it was employed before? Or why ſhould they be thought at all to have adopted the mythology becauſe they borrowed the name? See Farmer's Letters to Worthington, Let. II. p. 42. note N. Selden informs us, that the Hebrew monuments repreſent Aſmodeus as the prince of the demons, who was called alſo Samael, which is applied as a proper name to the devil, who deceived our firſt parents. The prince of the dæmons, and the ſeducer, were therefore the ſame perſon. In our Saviour's reaſoning likewiſe, Beelzebub is apparently repreſented as the ſame perſon with ſatan, the apoſtate leader of the fallen ſpirits. See Matt. xii. 24—28.

rather it may be ſuppoſed that they employed theſe titles as deſcriptive of evil ſpirits in general, and not as ſtrictly appropriate to any particular claſs or diſtinction of inviſible beings. The rabbinical conceits concerning the origin of dæmons lead to no preciſe and ſatisfactory account of the opinions of the ancient Jews upon the ſubject, and cannot certainly be allowed to invalidate the proofs which demonſtrate their belief in the exiſtence of ſuperior beings.

Our Saviour and his apoſtles ſpoke of theſe dæmons in the popular language of their time. Contented with ejecting powers, whoſe fatal influence was ſo obvious, they entered into no particular diſcuſſion of their character; and the evangelical writers, who ſpeak of dæmoniacs as common objects of attention, characterize them only by their general appellations, and by a general deſcription of their power, which, however, naturally leads us to a ſuppoſition of the actual interference of evil ſpirits.

That the ghoſts of men, departed this life, ſhould have been permitted to enter into the bodies of other mortals, and there, by a perſonal poſſeſſion, harraſs and afflict them, cannot

not now be ſuppoſed, ſince ſuch a ſuppoſition would be as inconſiſtent with the account of the ſtate of departed ſpirits given in ſcripture as with the arguments which reaſon and reflection might ſuggeſt *. But that the fallen ſpirits might be allowed to make ſuch actual diſplay of their malevolent power is conſiſtent with the repreſentations of their character in the ſacred writings, and with the acknowledged œconomy of the divine government.

If the influence of ſupernatural power were really experienced in thoſe hurtful inſtitutions of ancient times, in which it is ſuſpected to have prevailed, it muſt have been deduced from the interference of thoſe degraded ſpirits who directed their earlieſt efforts againſt the peace of mankind. If the Heathen oracles were inſpired with more than mortal knowledge, whence but from the powers of darkneſs was that knowledge derived? Miſtaken reverence might conſecrate its idols, and deluded worſhip might direct its attention to the deified ſhades of

* Luke xvi. 26. 1 Peter iii. 19. Eccleſ. ix. 6. Job xiv. 21. Farmer's Eſſay on Dæmon. p. 190, 191. Diſſert. on Mirac. p. 161. Worthington, p. 171.

mortal

mortal men; but if the gods of antiquity had ought beyond an imaginary and fictitious exiſtence *, they were, doubtleſs, the apoſtate angels who delighted to encourage ſuperſtitious ignorance, and to promote the deluſions of idolatry.

If the miracles, performed in vain oppoſition to Moſes by the Egyptians, and if the magical and necromantic arts in general, which formerly excited the ſuperſtitious

* Cyprian repreſents the Heathen gods as faithleſs and wandering ſpirits, whoſe celeſtial character was debaſed by earthly contagion; as ſkulking under conſecrated images, as inſpiring prophets, directing auguries, lots, and oracles, and taking poſſeſſion of men with deſign to miſlead them to idolatry; and affirms, that they were expelled by the adjuration of Chriſtians, and confeſſed their character in preſence of their worſhippers. Vide de Idol. Vanit. § 4. Origen likewiſe declares, that Chriſtians, by prayers and leſſons from ſcripture, drove dæmons from the places in which they were eſtabliſhed as well as from men and beaſts, whom he repreſents them to have often aſſailed. Cont. Celſ. Lib. VII. p. 376. Theophilus ſays, that the ſeducing ſpirits that were exorciſed in the name of God, confeſſed themſelves to be the ſame dæmons who had inſpired the Heathen prophets. Vide ad Autol. Lib. XXI. p. 87. Minut. Fel. Oct. p. 23. Lactan. Div. Inſt. Lib. II. c. xvi. Plutarch de defect. Oracul. Juſt. Mart. Apol. I. p. 10, 38. Dial. P. II. p. 318.

wonder

wonder and credulous reliance of mankind *, had ought of preternatural and miraculous effect, and were not merely the inventions of impoſture, they muſt have been ſupported by the aſſiſtance of ſuperior ſpirits, who were permitted to harden the obduracy, and to confirm the deluſions of a diſobedient and wayward people.

Leaving, however, theſe uncertain and precarious grounds, and confining ourſelves to the immediate object of enquiry, it may be maintained, that there are ſufficient proofs in the goſpel, that the powers and miniſters of ſatan did often poſſeſs the bodies of men, ſometimes with confederate malignity †, and evinced the operation and efficacy of their power by the frantic geſtures and extravagant ferocity of thoſe whom they poſſeſſed.

It has been aſſerted, indeed, by writers of conſiderable eminence and learning ‡, that the

* Juſt. Mart. Apol. I. p. 83, 84. Dial. P. I. p. 286, P. II. p. 318. Clem. Alex. Cohort. ad Gentil. p. 52. Edit. Potter. Euſeb. Eccleſ. Hiſt. Lib. II. c. xxiii.

† Mark iii. 15.

‡ Vide Plotinus, Ennead II. Lib. IX. c. xiv. Mede, B. I. Diſc. VI. Dodwell in Iren. Lib. II. § 47. p. 175.

Dr.

the dæmoniacs, mentioned in ſcripture, were perſons affected only with epileptic diſorders; or with ſome other ſpecies of inſanity, which might indicate its effects by the convulſive motions and wild demeanor of the patient; but though the divine power of Chriſt would have been ſufficiently demonſtrated by the inſtantaneous cure even of ſuch diſorders, and though poſſeſſion was often accompanied with inſanity, and diſorders intellectual and bodily *, it may be confidently maintained, that the ſcripture accounts treat of actual poſſeſſions, and that the word dæmon †, whether it ſhould be tranſlated devil or not, undoubtedly ſometimes applies to the ſpirit poſſeſſing the perſon, and not to the afflicted patient ‡.

Dr. Richard Mead, Dr. Sykes, Dr. Arthur Young, Dr. Lardner. See Douglas's Criterion, p. 263. note. Boyle's Lecture, fol. edit. Vol. III. p. 265. Farmer's Diſſert. on Mirac. and Eſſay on Demoniacs.

* Matt. xvii. 15.

† Δαιμων, Δαιμονιον. The words imply a deity, good or evil.

‡ Mark v. 12. ix. 22. Luke viii. 29. ix. 42.

Chriſt and his diſciples ſpeak of dæmoniacs as diſtinct from lunatics or diſordered perſons *; they addreſs the dæmons as actual beings, poſſeſſing the perſons of men †; they ſpeak of caſting out evil ſpirits from the bodies of men as diſtinct beings ‡, and ſometimes as limited to a ſpecific number §. The dæmons are repreſented, by the evangeliſts, as performing perſonal actions, and as ſpeaking to our Saviour ſometimes with clearer and more perfect apprehenſions of his character than human and diſordered perſons can be ſuppoſed to have acquired ‖.

It has been before obſerved, that many writers of Pagan and Jewiſh antiquity ſuppoſed that dæmoniacs were perſons under the influence of human ſpirits, diſpoſed, and liberated by the diſſolution of human bodies, to miſchievous conduct. That the ſuppoſition was

* Matt. iv. 24. viii. 16. x. 1. Mark i. 32, 34. Luke vi. 17, 18. vii. 21. viii. 2.

† Mark i. 25. ix. 25. v. 8. Luke iv. 35.

‡ Mark i. 26. Luke x. 17, 20. Acts xix. 16.

§ Luke viii. 2, 39. Matt. v. 20.

‖ Matt. viii. 29. Mark v. 7. Luke iv. 34, 41. viii. 28. Mark i. 24, 34. iii. 11. v. 7.

erroneous, few will queſtion: but it ſerves to prove, that the external effects of theſe poſſeſſions were ſufficient to demonſtrate the actual agency of a diſtinct and ſuperior being; and that they were very different from the ſymptoms and phrenſies of common inſanity. They were ſuch as to fully authorize our belief in the perſonal preſence of the fallen ſpirit, or of his angels, who occupied the whole man, and directed him in every function, ſuperſeding, as it were, his own faculties and powers, in a manner different from the effects of common diſorders, and with a control that no natural cauſes could produce *.

The ancients, indeed, in general appear to have ſuppoſed that the ſpirit was, upon theſe occaſions, the intelligent and directing power, from which the words and actions of the dæmoniac proceeded †. Our Saviour and his apoſtles generally countenance this idea, by addreſſing the ſpirit as the agent and

* Mark v. 3—5. Luke viii. 29. Origen Περι αρχων, Lib. III. c. iii. § 4.

† Vide Plato ap. Clem. Alex. Strom. I. p. 405. Lucian Philopſeud, p. 337. Tom. II. Edit. Amſtel. 1687. Philoſt. Vit. Apol. p. 157. Edit. Olear. Com. M. c. i. 23—26.

principal, though, as in popular language, it was not neceſſary accurately to diſcriminate in every addreſs the ſpirit from the perſon poſſeſſed, the dæmonized perſon is ſometimes ſpoken of by the evangeliſt as the organ of the evil ſpirit *.

It has been diſputed, whether the fathers of the four firſt centuries attributed poſſeſſions as deſcribed in ſcripture, and as they beheld them, to human ſpirits, or to the devil and his angels; and as their opinions may be ſuppoſed to have much weight in aſcertaining the truth, it may be worth while ſhortly to conſider the queſtion.

It is univerſally confeſſed, that theſe fathers believed in the exiſtence of evil ſpirits of an higher origin than that of men †; and we have

* Mark v. 6—9. Luke xi. 14.

† Clemens Alexand. Pæd. Lib. III. c. ii. p. 260. Irenæ. Hæres. Lib. II. c. v. Tertull. Apol. c. xxii. de Cult. Fæm. Lactant. Apol. p. 28. and c. xv. 11, 15. Tatian. Orat. cont. Græc. p. 148, 154. Minuc. Felix, § 26. Worthington's Impartial Enquiry. Some of the fathers, it is true, entertained idle notions of the nature of the demons, ſuppoſing them encloſed in ſomething of an æthereal materiality of body, Tertul. cont.

have reaſon to ſuppoſe, that in general they attributed the malignant efficacy, diſplayed in theſe poſſeſſions, to ſuperior beings, and

cont. Marcion. Lib. II. Origen, Περι αρχων, præf. § 8. inhabiting the denſe air near the earth, requiring food, inhaling odors, and being nouriſhed with blood. See Origen. Exhort. ad Martyr. § 44. p. 303. Juſtin Martyr, taking up, with other writers, a notion derived from judaical, or apocryphal accounts, and perhaps originally founded on a miſinterpretation of a paſſage in ſcripture, [ſee Gen. vi. 2.] ſuppoſes the demons, whoſe actions are aſcribed to Heathen deities, and who tormented mankind with ſins and diſorders, to be the offſpring of thoſe angels to whom the charge of human affairs was committed, and to women, with whom they had polluted themſelves. Apol. II. p. 112, 113. He repreſents them as ſhut up in eternal fire; Apol. II. p. 119. and conſiders the ſerpent, or ſatan, or the devil, as the chief of evil demons; Apol. I. p. 46. and, upon a ſuppoſition that he was an apoſtate ſpirit, attempts to give a derivation of his name; erroneous, indeed, from his ignorance of the Hebrew language. Dial. II. p. 360. Mr. Gibbon aſſerts, that it was the univerſal ſentiment, both of the church and of heretics, that the demons were the authors, the patrons, and the objects of idolatry. Thoſe rebellious ſpirits, who had been degraded from the rank of angels, and caſt down into the infernal pit, were ſtill permitted to roam upon earth, to torment the bodies, and to ſeduce the minds of ſinful men. In proof of which he refers to Juſtin Martyr, Lactantius, and Tertullian. Decline and Fall of Rom. Emp. c. xv.

not to the departed ſhades of men, in whoſe licenſed interference they had no grounds to believe. Of the power of the devil they entertained ſerious apprehenſions; they exorciſed and adjured him previouſly to baptiſm; and upon a ſuppoſition of his preſence, refuſed the euchariſt to dæmoniacs. St. Chryſoſtom, who oppoſed the notion that human ſpirits became dæmons, repreſents it as entertained by the meaner ſort * and the multitude †; expreſſions which, notwithſtanding the forced conſtructions that have been put upon them ‡, ſeem to import that it was an opinion held only by the lower claſſes, and rejected by the learned.

It appears then, upon a general conſideration of the ſentiments of antiquity, as well as from the obvious interpretation of the ſacred accounts, that there is ſufficient reaſon to attribute the poſſeſſions, mentioned in ſcripture, to the agency of evil ſpirits; and this will be ſtill farther demonſtrated by a

* Πολλοι των αφελεστερων. de Laz. Ser. II. Tom. I. p. 727.

† Τοις Πολλοις.

‡ See Farmer's Letters to Worthington, p. 71, § 2.

repre-

repreſentation of the miracle now to be conſidered.

St. Matthew relates, that when our Saviour was come into the country of the Gergeſenes, which was either, as ſome verſions and manuſcripts ſeem to prove, an erroneous tranſcription for the country of the Gadarenes *, mentioned by St. Mark and St. Luke, or, perhaps, a diſtrict of the province ſpoken of by thoſe evangeliſts, there met him two perſons poſſeſſed with devils, one of which was particularly diſtinguiſhed, for one only is mentioned by St. Mark and St. Luke who likewiſe relate the particulars of this miracle with that conſiſtency which reſults from truth, but with thoſe minute differences which prove that there was no contrived agreement in their accounts.

It appears, from the ſacred hiſtory, that the dæmoniacs who met our Saviour, came out of the tombs; and it may be collected from other accounts concerning the dæmons,

* Gadara, ſo called from the tribe of Gad, to which it was allotted, was a part of Decapolis, the metropolis of Paræa, in Cœlo-Syria, eaſtward of the lake of Tiberias. Vid. Baron. Annal. p. 301. Lond. 1614. Reland. Paleſt. p. 2. Joſeph. de Bell. Jud. Lib. V. c. iii.

that they compelled thoſe whom they poſſeſſed, to the ſepulchres of the dead: to places of gloomy and ſequeſtered ſolitude *, where they might moſt ſucceſsfully exerciſe their dominion, and where they might moſt powerfully operate on the fears of thoſe who caſually encountered them. The dark and awful manſions of the dead, the ſpots to which the corruptible remains of mortality are conſigned, have ever been the ſcenes which awaken the paſſions, and arreſt the fears of mankind. It is here that the conſiderate reflect with fearful and inſtructive meditation; and it is here that the weak are appalled with indiſtinct and erroneous terrors.

By exerciſing their tyranny amidſt the depoſitaries of the dead, the miniſters of Satan confirmed the deluſions of thoſe who imagined that dæmons were human ſpirits †, and

* In eaſtern countries, ſepulchres were generally in the moſt ſolitary and unfrequented places, where the vapours of infection might be leaſt injurious. They were ſometimes hewn out of rocks and mountains.

† Tertullian informs us, that evil ſpirits ſometimes endeavoured to delude men from the true doctrine by aſſerting themſelves to be men, in order to diſturb the faith of a judgment and reſurrection; but that afterwards,

and thereby miſled the attention, and heightened the ſuperſtitions of mankind.

At the approach of Chriſt, of him who was the expected victor of the powers of darkneſs, they who had terrified others were themſelves alarmed, and cried out, ſaying, "What have we to do with thee, Jeſus, thou "Son of God? art thou come hither to tor-"ment us before the time," before the judgment of the great day *? The devils, who were ſenſible of, and awed by the preſence of God, imagined, that as he had yet diſplayed no proofs of triumph, they had ſtill time to harraſs and afflict mankind. Though, with trembling conviction, they looked forward to the accompliſhment of the predicted curſe, as Chriſt had yet given no demonſtra-

wards, overruled by the preſence of divine grace, they reluctantly confeſſed their character. Tertullian, de Anim. c. lvii. which is not in contradiction, as Farmer unjuſtly affirms, with his former account, that ſome dæmons were the iſſue of angels by the daughters of men, or that the Chriſtians could compel dæmons to declare what they truly were, as finally he ſays they did. See Farmer's Eſſay on Miracles, p. 226. See alſo Chryſoſt. de Lazar. Tom. I. p. 728.

* Jude vi. 6. 2 Peter ii. 4.

tion

tion of his final victory over ſin, they ſtill, with malignant exultation, hoped to contrive againſt the happineſs of man *.

"And there was, a good way off," continues the evangeliſt, "an herd of ſwine feeding." The Jews were, by the precepts of the Levitical law, prohibited from eating ſwine's fleſh, or even from touching their carcaſe †, firſt and principally, perhaps, becauſe it was chiefly offered up in idolatrous ſacrifices to Heathen deities ‡; and alſo, among many other reaſons, becauſe it contributed to produce and aggravate the leproſy: a diſorder which then prevailed conſiderably in the eaſtern countries, and of which unclean diſeaſe the Moſaic law, addreſſed to a people eſpecially conſecrated to God's ſervice, inculcated particular abhorrence.

It does not appear, from the relation, for what purpoſe theſe ſwine were kept, as the evangeliſts furniſh no ſuperfluous information.

* The devils beſought Chriſt that he would not command them to go out into the deep, Luke viii. 31. meaning, probably, by the deep, a place allotted to evil ſpirits. 2 Peter ii. 4. Revel. ix. 1—2. and Whitby.

† Levit. xi. 7, 8. Deut. xiv. 8.

‡ Iſaiah lxv. 4. lxvi. 3, 17.

It is probable, however, that they were kept either by the Jews, in defiance of the Levitical prohibition; or by ſome of thoſe Heathens who inhabited the country of the Gadarenes, with a view to ſeduce the Jews to a tranſgreſſion of the law; a deſign not unfrequently diſcovered in the enemies of this ſelected people, and originating in a conviction, that as they departed from the commandments, they forfeited the protection of God. The devils might, therefore, with more confidence of ſucceſs, ſolicit permiſſion to enter the ſwine as appertaining to perſons who contributed indirectly, at leaſt, to the violation of a revealed law. Their motive might probably be, to exert a malicious pleaſure in accompliſhing miſchief; and our Saviour, when they beſought him, ſuffered them to effectuate the puniſhment of the poſſeſſers of the ſwine. "He ſaid unto "them, Go; and when they were come "out, they went into the herd of ſwine; and "behold the whole herd ran violently down "a ſteep place, and periſhed in the ſea *."

To

* A traditionary remembrance of this miracle was preſerved in the time of Origen; and a rock, near the lake

To ſuffer or to command evil ſpirits to depart from men into ſwine, was ſurely a work of mercy; and it muſt be ſuperfluous to obſerve, that he who was Lord of all things had an unqueſtionable right to diſpoſe of the properties of his creatures, as ſhould ſeem good to him; nor can the captious and frivolous objections of thoſe who cavil at the decree, be thought to merit a ſerious refutation.

It is, at firſt ſight, obvious to remark, that by this ejection of the evil ſpirits, not by exorciſms and fantaſtic ſhew, but by the efficacy of a word *, our Saviour demonſtrated, as well the omnipotence of his controlling power as the actual and perſonal exiſtence of thoſe malignant beings who bore teſtimony to his godhead. The powers of darkneſs could not willingly offer up evidence to truth, nor could they conſpire, with eagerneſs, to their own defeat, unleſs conſtrained by an overruling power. He then

lake of Tiberias, was ſhewn as the place from which the ſwine were precipitated. Origen. Com. in Matt. p. 311. Tom. I. Edit. Huet.

* Matt. viii. 16. ix. 33. Mark i. 27.

who,

who, while he exerted the authority of God, was acknowledged by the devils as the Son of God, muſt verily, and indeed, have been entitled to thoſe attributes which he aſſumed.

The expreſs deſign, likewiſe, of Chriſt, in complying with the requeſt of the dæmons, was, doubtleſs, to evince, in the moſt apparent and unqueſtionable manner, the real and poſitive exiſtence of thoſe evil beings who labour for the deſtruction of the human race. This miracle may, therefore, be produced among other parts of ſcripture to prove the literal and abſolute operation of evil ſpirits. The open effects of their agency have, indeed, now ceaſed. The firſt fruits of Chriſt's victory were to check and circumſcribe their malignant power, "making a ſhew of them openly, triumphing over them on (or by) his croſs." The apoſtles likewiſe, and their immediate ſucceſſors *, whoſe miniſtry was ſignalized

* Thoſe who diſpute the exiſtence of miraculous powers in the church, after the death of the apoſtles, are driven to a very ſophiſtical interpretation of paſſages in the writings of the apoſtolic fathers, and are obliged to contradict and invalidate what they admit to be "ſtrong, explicit, and repeated atteſtations of many extraordinary gifts

ſignalized by a miraculous authority, were inveſted with a power of controlling and expelling evil ſpirits *.

It appears, however, from the unanimous teſtimony of the earlier fathers, that for three centuries after Chriſt the viſible influence of dæmons was experienced; and that till the foundations of chriſtianity were firmly eſtabliſhed, and our religion countenanced, under the protection of the ſecular power †, not

gifts and miraculous powers which were publicly exerted in Chriſtian churches through each ſucceeding age." Middleton's free Enquiry.

* Luke ix. 1. x. 17, 18.

† Whiſton collected teſtimonies to prove, that the power of expelling dæmons remained till the middle of the 4th century. The chief difficulty that embarraſſes thoſe who admit the continuance of miracles in the primitive church, is to aſcertain the period of their ceſſation. It is impoſſible to diſpute the teſtimonies of the exiſtence of miraculous gifts during the three firſt centuries, unleſs we overthrow all hiſtorical evidence whatever; and though falſe accounts are mingled with relations of miracles in the 4th century, it is preſumptuous to deny that they were then performed upon ſome occaſions. Dodwell ſuppoſes them to have continued till the time of Euſebius, who flouriſhed towards the concluſion of the 3d century. Waterland ſeems inclined, from the authority

not only the teachers of religion, but others likewiſe, in the name of Chriſt, were enabled, by divine aſſiſtance, to deliver thoſe who were poſſeſſed, as is inconteſtably proved by thoſe who had witneſſed ſuch diſpoſſeſſions.

Juſtin Martyr, in an apology to the Roman ſenate, which muſt have attracted attention, and of which the intention muſt have been evidently defeated, by the introduction of falſehood, appealed to what was within the obſervation of all, that many Chriſtians had reſtored, by invocation of the name of Chriſt, and ſtill continued to reſtore, by putting dæmons to flight, many perſons through the whole world, and in their chief city,

rity of Paulinus, to extend them till the latter end of the 4th century. If, however, we reject the forgeries of later times, which record fictitious miracles in imitation of genuine accounts, we cannot properly diſpute the evidence of the earlier fathers, ſince, though their zeal for chriſtianity was ſometimes tinctured with enthuſiaſm, their uniform and united teſtimonies are indiſputable; and they could not be deluded, or intend to deceive, when they appeal to this exiſting power of caſting out evil ſpirits as to one of the ſtrongeſt proofs of the truth of the Chriſtian pretenſions. See Waterland's Importance of the Trinity. The power of performing miracles was, in all probability, gradually withdrawn. See Dodwell's Diſſert. on Iren. Lib. XXVI. § 62.

whom

whom other exorciſts, whom ſorcerers and charmers could not cure *.

Tertullian alſo, who lived towards the concluſion of the ſecond century, in his Apology addreſſed to the Roman Government or Prieſthood, offers to reſt the truth of chriſtianity, and the ſafety of its diſciples, on the power of Chriſtians, to eject evil ſpirits. He, in his defence publicly challenges his adverſaries to produce, before the tribunals, any one poſſeſſed of a dæmon; and deſires, that immediate death may be inflicted on that unworthy Chriſtian who ſhould not be able to compel the dæmon to confeſs his character †. Origen ‡ atteſts likewiſe,

* Juſtin Martyr, Apol. II. p. 116. Dial. Part II. p. 321. Iren. Lib. II. c. 57. Euſeb. Hiſt. Lib. V. c. vii.

† Tertull. Apol. c. xxiii. Minuc. Felix, c. xxvii. Cyprian ad Donat. p. 3, 13. De Idol. Vanit. p. 10. Lactant. Lib. II. c. xii. Farmer on Miracles, p. 217. An order of men, called Exorciſts, was eſtabliſhed in the primitive church for the adjuring of evil ſpirits; and the real miracles performed in the name of Chriſt gave riſe to many fictitious imitations in later times.

‡ Origen cont. Cels. Lib. I. § 6, 25, 46, 67. L. VII. § 4, 67. Edit. Par. Vol. I. Clemen. Recog. L. IV. c. xxxii. xxxiii. p. 461. Cyprian. de Idol. Vanit. § 4. Minuc. Felix. § 27.

that

that there were many perſons among the meaneſt Chriſtians, who, without ſorcery or magic, did, by prayer and ſimple adjurations, eject dæmons; adding, agreeably to the authentic repreſentations of ſcripture *, that ſo efficacious to this purpoſe was the name of Chriſt, that it ſometimes availed when employed even by wicked men †.

When, however, chriſtianity was too firmly eſtabliſhed to need any extraordinary evidence, the external operation of evil ſpirits appears to have ceaſed, as conſequently the miraculous powers which were neceſſary to control their ferocity: they were led captive at the departure of the appointed guardians of

* Matt. vii. 32. Mark ix. 38. Luke ix. 49. xi. 19. St. Auſtin indeed, and others, underſtand by the ſons here mentioned the 70 diſciples. Cyprian. de Idol. Van. p. 206. ad Donat. p. 14. Edit. Ox. Lactantius ſays, that the followers of Chriſt ejected evil ſpirits by the name of Chriſt, and the ſign of his paſſion. See alſo Tertul. ad Scap. c. ii. Theoph. ad Autol. L. II. p. 87. Juſtin Martyr thought that if any ſhould exorciſe dæmons in the name of the God of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, it would be efficacious, Dial. Part II. p. 321. and Irenæus ſays, that even Jews did eject dæmons by invocation of God's name. Lib. II. c. v. p. 123. Matt. xii. 27.

† Matt. vii. 22, 23.

Chriſt's church, and ſuffered to aſſault mankind only in thoſe ſpiritual conflicts for which ſpiritual protection is ſupplied. Their apparent interference was ſuppreſſed *, and their public defeat is ſuppoſed to have been more fully manifeſted by the ceſſation † of thoſe oracles, which, however notorious for evaſive equivocations, are ſometimes repreſented to have been inſpired with more than human ſagacity. The memory, however, of their open influence, was long retained; and has continued, in every age, to ſhew itſelf in the traditionary fears, and popular relations, of all countries.

Among many eaſtern nations, where ſuperſtitious ignorance hath built largely on the foundations of truth, nothing is, at this day, ſo common as a belief in diabolical poſſeſſions; and where, in Europe, is the country ſo philoſophical and enlightened as to retain no veſtiges of a ſimilar credulity ‡?

In

* John xii. 31.

† Strabo, Lib. IX. p. 419. Plutarch de Defect. Orac. p. 411. Euſeb. Præp. Evang. Lib. V. c. i.

‡ It ſhould be obſerved, that the learned biſhop of Worceſter has given ſome countenance to the belief in poſſeſſions

In England, even after the light of reformation had broken through the miſts which ſuperſtition had raiſed, a perſuaſion of the operation of evil ſpirits on the perſons of men, ſtill continued to prevail, and was productive of very ſerious and extenſive miſchiefs *.

Opinions are never univerſally eſtabliſhed without ſome baſis. It is the office of reaſon to diſcriminate truth from fictitious additions; and he who will ground his faith on revelation, will be ſecure alike from cauſeleſs ap-

poſſeſſions at the preſent day, by ſaying, that he does not know on what certain grounds any man can deny them. But the Enquiry, ſays he, is of leſs moment, becauſe, ſince the gift of diſcerning ſpirits has ceaſed in the church, we have no means of diſtinguiſhing between poſſeſſions and natural diſorders; and becauſe, if we had, there is no known cure or antidote for them. See Biſhop Hurd's Sermon XIII. Vol. III. p. 239.

* About 146 perſons are repreſented to have incurred penalties and puniſhments in England ſince the reformation, by Proteſtant judges and juries, for ſuppoſed communication and practice with evil ſpirits; and in almoſt every other country of Europe, perſecutions for witchcraft have been frequent and ſanguinary. See Hutchinſon on Witchcraft.

prehenſion and deſtructive confidence. From a conſideration of the ſcripture accounts, he will diſcard Sadducean incredulity, and be convinced of the actual exiſtence of malignant ſpirits, who labour, with unremitted induſtry, to the prejudice of mankind. He will learn to fear them no longer as fiends, permitted in this world to terrify and torment the bodies of men, but as concealed and inſidious enemies, who ſeek to effect the eternal perdition of their ſouls. He will guard againſt them where they are really dangerous. Perſuaded that the adverſary, whom he feareth, "goeth to and fro," ſeeking whom he may injure and ſeduce, he will vigilantly ſtrive to defeat the purpoſe: he will ſupplicate aſſiſtance againſt him, not merely as againſt an evil principle, as they idly talk, who err, not knowing the ſcriptures, but as againſt a tempter, by whom Chriſt himſelf was tempted; as the fatal enemy, from whoſe whiſpers ariſe the evil ſuggeſtion, and the unholy thought *; the wiſh, and the occaſion to ſin †.

* John xiii. 2, 27. Acts iii. 3.

† 1 Peter v. 8. 1 John iii. 8. Luke xxii. 31. Mark iv. 15. Acts xv. 3. 2 Cor. ii. 11. Epheſ. vi. 12.

Who,

Who, indeed, that meditates on the wayward propenſities, and ſinful appetites, that occaſionally allure, or precipitate the mind to evil: who that has felt the impulſe of vanity, of avarice, of ambition, the ſuggeſtions of anger, and the dictates of intemperance: who that, in proſperity, has been ſeduced to pride; and who that, in affliction, hath been tempted to deſpair, but muſt perceive, on reflection, that he has been miſled by the arts and ſuggeſtions of the great adverſary of mankind?

Who, likewiſe, that contemplates the private diſſenſions and hateful conteſts of ſociety; who that beholds the envyings, the frauds, the violence, the oppreſſions and uncharitable deeds, which malignantly combine againſt the peace of mankind, but muſt acknowledge that the fallen ſpirit hath buſied himſelf in diſſeminating the ſeeds of diſcord and miſery among the ſons of men. "Surely "an enemy hath done this;" an enemy ever active to inflame the paſſions, and to aggravate the ſuggeſtions of a corrupted nature.

Againſt the aſſaults and evil endeavours of that enemy, we are inſtructed to pray, in

that compendious form of prayer, which our Saviour furniſhed *; and it is only by unremitted vigilance, and by that aſſiſtance which is to be obtained by prayer, that we can effectually counteract his ſucceſs †. It is piety alone, which, like the harp of David, ſhall diſpoſſeſs us of every evil quality. It is our important intereſt to cultivate the principles of religion, if we would raiſe up barriers againſt our dangerous and inſidious enemies. If we cloſe not every avenue againſt their acceſs, we ſhall gradually be depraved to a reſemblance of thoſe whom we abhor, and be finally involved in their deſtruction ‡.

To encourage the growth of Chriſtian purity, is to diſcountenance the powers of darkneſs. It is to put to flight thoſe who, like Judas, would betray innocence to danger. It is to qualify ourſelves hereafter to aſſociate with

* That by τȣ πονηρȣ, in our Lord's Prayer, we are to underſtand the great adverſary of mankind, and not merely natural and moral evil, has been ſufficiently proved by commentators, and, indeed, appears by the word of the text. Vide Matt. vi. 13. and Dr. Lort's Treatiſe. Matt. x. 28.

† James iv. 7. 1 Peter iii. 8.

‡ 2 Peter ii. 4. Jude 6.

thoſe righteous ſpirits, who, devoid of all evil paſſions, enjoy the contemplation of the divine perfections, and with whom we ſhall be permitted, if not unworthy of ſuch tranſcendent happineſs, to participate the glories of an immortal ſtate.

DISCOURSE V.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

For EASTER DAY.

PART I.

LUKE XXIV. 4—8.

And it came to paſs, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold two men ſtood by them in ſhining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they ſaid unto them, Why ſeek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is riſen: remember how he ſpake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, ſaying, The Son of man muſt be delivered into the hands of ſinful men, and be crucified, and the third day riſe again. And they remembered his words.

THE circumſtances of the reſurrection of our Saviour, which are this day recalled to our eſpecial remembrance, are deſcribed, more

more or leſs minutely, by all the evangeliſts. In the ſeveral deſcriptions of this great event, there is ſuch variation as might be expected from perſons not writing upon any plan of concerted agreement, and relating, according to the ſcope and deſign of their goſpel, detached and independent events, while, at the ſame time, there is ſufficient correſpondence in the accounts to illuſtrate their conſiſtency with truth.

Minute conformity is the plauſible gloſs of artifice; ſincerity labours not for ſpecious and exact coincidence. By accurately collating the evangelical relations, by noting the diſtinctions which, in a conciſe deſcription, are not always marked, and by ſeparating the different particulars, which are often crowded into one eventful page, we ſhall be able to diſcover a clear and conſiſtent hiſtory, where haſty and preſumptuous readers have talked of miſtakes and contradictions, which could not fairly be charged on writers of the loweſt character, much leſs be ſuſpected to have eſcaped from the ſacred hiſtorians.

From the collective accounts of the evangeliſts, it appears, that "on the firſt day of "the week," towards the dawn of the third day,

day, after Chriſt's burial, "before the dark-"neſs was yet diſperſed *," Mary Magdalen, accompanied by Mary, the mother of James, ſet off to view the ſepulchre of Jeſus. It ſhould ſeem that Mary, whoſe eager affections might prompt her to the diſplay of a more lively and earneſt zeal, ſet off before the time † at which, on the preceding evening, it might have been agreed by her and the other women to aſſemble, with prepared ſpices, to anoint the body of their Lord. She and Mary, however, being joined on

* St. Matthew ſpeaks of the time at which St. Mary ſet out for the ſepulchre, (ηλθε, meaning, went as we came) as is evident from the order of his diſcourſe, in which are afterwards related (as in order of time they occurred) the earthquake, and the deſcent of the angel; and, by this account, we are furniſhed with the date of the reſurrection, which took place between the dawning of the day and the ſun riſing. Vid. Auguſt. de Conſenſ. Evang. Lib. III. § 65, 66. "As it began to dawn," the time mentioned by St. Matthew, correſponds with the expreſſion of St. John, "while it was yet dark."

† Weſt ingeniouſly remarks, that Πρωι, uſed by St. Mark and St. John, ſhould be rendered, "over early," before the appointed time, as it is otherwiſe redundant, "while "it was yet dark," and "before the riſing of the ſun," being ſufficient. See Mark xvi. 2. John xx. 1.

their

their way, arrived at the ſepulchre at the riſing of the ſun. About the time of their departure there had been a great earthquake; and the angel of the Lord had deſcended from heaven, and rolled back the ſtone * with which the ſuſpicious traducers of Chriſt had cloſed the mouth of the ſepulchre; at whoſe fearful appearance † the ſoldiers, appointed to guard the ſepulchre, had become "as dead men;" and, probably, during their amazement, Chriſt had riſen.

It appears that Mary Magdalene had no ſooner obſerved that the ſtone was moved from the ſepulchre, than convinced that the body of Chriſt muſt have been taken away, ſhe hurried back with the intelligence to Peter, while the other Mary and Salome entered the external encloſure of the ſepul-

* The ſtone, according to Beza's copy of the goſpel, was ſo large, that twenty men could hardly roll it.

† The angel appears to have deſcended, not only to open the entrance to the ſepulchre, but to terrify the ſoldiers from their poſt, who might otherwiſe have obſtructed the approach of the diſciples. The women were, poſſibly, not appriſed of the Roman guard; and when they were going to the ſepulchre, they deliberated who ſhould remove the ſtone.

chre,

chre *, and were addreſſed by the angel, who had removed the ſtone, and who informed them that Chriſt was riſen, inviting them to approach nearer, and ſee the place where the Lord lay. Soon after, Peter and John, having received Mary's account, ran unto the ſepulchre, and Peter having entered in, ſaw "the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itſelf †," with a deliberate care, which proved that there was no haſty removal of the body.

* Mary, it ſhould ſeem, did not ſtay to enter the ſepulchre. St. Matthew, who mentions not every minute particular, omits to ſpeak of the ſeparation of the women; but it muſt have taken place, ſince Mary had not beheld any viſion of angels before ſhe ran to Peter, otherwiſe ſhe would have mentioned it to Peter; and ſhe would not have lamented, on account of the ſuppoſed removal of the body, or have enquired of Chriſt (whom ſhe miſtook for the gardener) where they had laid it. Yet as Mary, in her account to the apoſtles, ſaid, in the joint name of thoſe that were with her, "*we*" know not where they have laid him, the report might be repreſented by St. Peter and St. John as the joint report of the two Maries.

† They do not ſeem to have ſeen the angels, who were, probably, not always in continuance viſible.

Mary,

Mary, who, after the departure of the diſciples, approached, ſtood without, at the ſepulchre, weeping; and "as ſhe wept, ſhe "ſtooped down, and looked into the ſepul-"chre, and ſeeth two angels in white, "ſitting *, one at the head, and the other "at the feet, where the body of Jeſus had "lain; and they ſay unto her, Woman, why "weepeſt thou? And ſhe ſaid, Becauſe they "have taken away the body of my Lord, "and I know not where they have laid him. "And when ſhe had thus ſaid, ſhe turned her-"ſelf back, and ſaw Jeſus ſtanding, and knew "not that it was Jeſus;" who ſoon, however, diſcloſed himſelf to her, and ſaid, "Touch "me not, for I am not yet aſcended unto my "Father; but go to my brethren, and ſay "unto them, I aſcend unto my Father, and "unto your Father, and to my God, and "your God †."

Not

* Mary came after the departure of the diſciples; for ſhe ſaw the angels, who did not appear to Peter and John; and the angels afterwards ſtood up; for St. Luke repreſents them to have been ſeen ſtanding.

† Weſt thinks, that by theſe words Chriſt deſigned to allude to the promiſes which he had made and would fulfil. Vid. John xiv. xv. xvi. and to intimate that Mary needed

not

Not long after, Chriſt appeared to the other Mary and Salome as they fled, joyful and affrighted, from the ſepulchre, and ſaid unto them, "All hail:" and they came and held him by the feet, and worſhipped him. "Then ſaid Jeſus unto them, Be not afraid; "go tell my brethren that they go into "Galilee, and there ſhall they ſee me."

After the departure of the women and the apoſtles from the ſepulchre, Joanna, with the Galilean women, and women of Jeruſalem with them, came bringing the ſpices which they had prepared, and entering into the ſepulchre, beheld the two men in ſhining garments, who addreſſed them in the words ſelected in my text, which, when the women reported unto the apoſtles, their words ſeemed unto them as idle tales, and they believed them not: but Peter, who had been before at the ſepulchre *, hearing from Joanna that ſhe

not to take leave of him; but, perhaps, they imply only that Chriſt, after his reſurrection, muſt firſt aſcend to God.

* St. Peter went twice to the ſepulchre; firſt, on the report of Mary Magdalene; and, ſecondly, on that of Joanna. It is certain, that St. Luke, in the 12th verſe of

ſhe had ſeen a viſion of angels, who had aſſured her that Chriſt was riſen, again ran to the ſepulchre, and ſtooping down, looked in, but ſeeing only the linen clothes, and no appearance of angels, he departed, wondering in himſelf at that which was come to paſs; and either with Peter, or about that time, went ſome other diſciples, who were preſent when Joanna reported what ſhe had ſeen, and found it even ſo as the women had ſaid.

It appears, from a conſideration of theſe particulars, that in conſequence of the reſort of ſeparate companies to the ſepulchre, the proofs and aſſurances of Chriſt's reſurrection were multiplied; and as all of thoſe parties which had witneſſed the viſion, and heard the information of the angels, muſt have

of the 24th chapter of his goſpel, ſpeaks of a different viſit of St. Peter to the ſepulchre from that mentioned by St. John. Comp. Luke xxiv. 12. with John xxvi. 6, 7. St. Luke ſays nothing of St. John's accompanying St. Peter; and, in the latter inſtance, St. Peter did not enter, but only looked in, and might have ſeen the angels, had they then appeared, as Mary Magdalene did from the outſide. See John xx. 11. See this fully made out by Weſt, who explains the account, and points out the deſign and benefit of the ſucceſſive circumſtances that proved the reſurrection of Chriſt.

haſtened

haſtened to communicate ſuch important intelligence to their ſeveral friends, the glad tidings were diſperſed, and the attention of mankind was awakened to obſervation on the farther wonders which were about to appear.

It is clear, from all the accounts of the evangeliſts who ſpeak of our Lord's firſt appearance, that the penitent and afflicted Mary Magdalene was firſt honoured with the ſight of him. He ſoon afterwards appeared to the other Mary and Salome *; and, on the ſame day, made himſelf known to two of his diſciples, who were journeying to Emmaus †, after having communed with them, and, in affecting reaſoning, explained to them the ſcriptures, their eyes being at firſt holden that

* Matt. xxviii. 9.

† Luke xxiv. 13—32. The two diſciples ſeem not to have heard Mary Magdalene's report, for ſhe had ſeen Jeſus; and the angels had not ſaid to her that he was alive; neither had the diſciples received the report from the other Mary and Salome, to whom Jeſus had appeared, as they were haſtening with the angel's meſſage to the diſciples; they had heard, therefore, probably, only the account of Joanna and her companion, which, though an account of events, later in point of time, muſt have been delivered earlier than that of Mary, who might have miſſed Peter.

they ſhould not know him, leſt their minds ſhould be confuſed, and their underſtanding not have a free and unbiaſſed ſcope, till he diſcovered himſelf to them in breaking bread, probably, by ſome peculiar action and form of thankſgiving, as perhaps by that which he had uſed at the laſt ſupper.

Chriſt afterwards appeared on ſeveral occaſions *. He appeared to Peter on the day of his reſurrection, † though the evangeliſts have not particularized the circumſtances of his appearance. He appeared at the ſea of Tiberias, or the ſea of Galilee, as he had foretold ‡; and afterwards at an appointed mountain in Galilee §. He converſed with his

* 1 Cor. xv. 5—7. John xx. 19, 26. Mark xvi. 14. The evangeliſts appear to have related only what was connected with the ſcope of their diſcourſe. Thus St. Luke mentions the appearance to Joanna as connected with the account of the appearance to the diſciples journeying to Emmaus. St. Matthew ſpeaks of two appearances; St. Mark and St. Luke of three; and St. John of four.

† Luke xxiv. 34.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 32. John xxi. 1.

§ Matt. xxviii. 16. Galilee was the country of Chriſt's birth, reſidence, and miracles: he was therefore more known there. He did not, however, appear to all indiſcriminately, but to witneſſes choſen before of God. Vid. Acts x. 41.

diſciples,

diſciples, at intervals, during forty days, till after his final benediction, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven *.

Such are the particulars of that reſurrection which we are called upon to conſider, on this day, which is emphatically entitled the Lord's day, and which gives its denomination to the Chriſtian ſabbath, which hath been obſerved with eſpecial devotion from the earlieſt ages of the church, and is particularly to be conſecrated to thoſe religious conſiderations which it ſuggeſts.

If, in conformity to the order of the hiſtorical events, we begin with the dawn of day, and accompany Mary and her companions to the ſepulchre of Chriſt, we feel ſurpriſed to find, that the confidential friends and aſſociate diſciples of our Lord, ſhould have conceived no hopes of that bleſſed reſurrection which

* Acts i. 3. Chriſt appears to have aſcended to his Father from Bethany, on the evening of the day of his reſurrection. See Luke xxiv. 50, 51. John xx. 17. to have afterwards converſed with his diſciples, at intervals, during forty days, till he was finally parted from them by a cloud receiving him out of their ſight from Mount Olivet. Acts i. 9. See Boyle's Lectures, Vol. II. p. 343.

they were about to witneſs. It appears, that the intellectual, like the natural darkneſs, was not yet diſperſed; and that they aſſembled at the ſepulchre to anoint and honour the body of their Lord, not aware that they ſought "the living among the dead," "for "as yet they knew not the ſcriptures that "he muſt riſe again from the dead."

The full dignity and ſplendor of Chriſt's character was as yet concealed. The important deſign of his advent and ſufferings was not completely diſcloſed. They who had received inſtructions from the lips of Jeſus himſelf, though their eyes had been, in ſome meaſure, opened to admire the accompliſhment of prophecy in him, as the expected Meſſiah; though they had witneſſed the miraculous circumſtances that preceded, and accompanied his advent; though they had liſtened to the wiſdom of his diſcourſe, and heard him proclaimed "the well-beloved "Son of God," ſeem not to have underſtood the neceſſity of his death, or to have foreſeen the glorious circumſtances that would be thereby opened to mankind. The apparent inconſiſtency of a Meſſiah without ſplendor, and the myſtery of an incarnate God,

were

were not yet fully explained. They did not underſtand an exaltation to be derived from voluntary abaſement, a victory to be obtained by ſufferings, a religion to be ſealed on the croſs, a triumph to be opened in the grave.

Hence it was, that though in the tranſfiguration of Chriſt, ſome of the diſciples had witneſſed a viſible and ſymbolical repreſentation of his future glory *; though they had heard frequent alluſions to the expected ſufferings of their Maſter; though they had heard him tell the Jews that if they deſtroyed "the temple of his body," he would "raiſe "it up in three days †; though they had been poſitively told by him, that he went up to Jeruſalem in certain expectation of "ſuf-"fering many things of the elders and chief "prieſts, and ſcribes, and of being betrayed,

* See the Biſhop of London's Eſſay on the Tranſfiguration of Chriſt. Our Saviour commanded the three diſciples, who were preſent at the viſion, to tell it to no man till his reſurrection, as, till then, its prophetic intention would not have been underſtood, and its deſign might have been miſconceived. Vid. Matt. xvii. 9.

† John ii. 19—21. Matt. xvii. 22. xxvi. 21—32. Mark xiv. 18. Luke xix. 22.

" killed, and raiſed the third day*;" and though they had heard Peter reproved, when with an affection, miſtaken, and ſavouring of earthly ſentiments, he had ſaid, " Be it far " from thee, Lord; this ſhall not be unto " thee;" yet did they entertain no diſtinct conviction, nor even, it ſhould ſeem, any expectation of the reſurrection of their Lord.

When, therefore, Mary and her companions approached the ſepulchre, it was with reverence for the memory of a well-beloved Teacher and Lord; with deſire of giving every teſtimony of regard to the remembrance of one who had been miraculouſly diſtinguiſhed, and from whom they had expected ſtill greater evidence and demonſtration of power, till the termination of his life had cut off their preſent expectations of deliverance. When Mary wept, it was becauſe ſhe conceived that they had taken away the body which ſhe came to indulge her grief in contemplating†. She knew not where they " had laid him." When the angel had

* See alſo Matt. xvi. 21, 22. xx. 18. Mark ix. 31. John xvi. 16.

† John xx. 11—13.

aſſured

aſſured the other women, of his reſurrection, and recalled the words which Chriſt had ſpoken, to their remembrance, and when they reported this to the apoſtles, the apoſtles believed not the words of the women, which "ſeemed to them as idle tales*." Cleopas was ſo inſenſible of the poſſibility of a deliverance by a crucified Meſſiah, that when Chriſt communed with him and his companions, he lamented the crucifixion as an unexpected diſappointment of their hopes of redemption to Iſrael †. Some of thoſe, with the eleven, when they ſaw him at an appointed mountain in Galilee, "ſtill doubted ‡;" and Thomas, eight days after, would not believe till he had been ſuffered to receive palpable evidence of Chriſt's reſurrection, and been convinced that he had the real properties of a body.

Great as had been the miracles which Chriſt had diſplayed, omnipotent as his power had been demonſtrated to be, by the actual reſtoration of life, to thoſe who had yielded up its breath; preciſe alſo, and emphatic as

* Luke xxiv. 11. Mark xvi. 11.

† Luke xxiv. 21. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 16, 17.

were the aſſurances which he had given of his own reſurrection, yet ſuch a reſtoration of their bleſſed Lord was beyond what his friends had preſumed to hope, and ſuperior to what they could readily believe. However, when depreſſed by affliction, they might be ſuppoſed to cheriſh hope, and to call up the recollection of any promiſe that might afford conſolation to their dejected minds: they do not appear to have remembered, or to have underſtood the promiſed reſurrection, till reminded by the angel of the words of Chriſt *.

As the full ſcheme of redemption was not yet underſtood, and as all the traditions and opinions of the Jews led them to ſuppoſe that the Meſſiah could not die †, they muſt

* The chief prieſts and Phariſees recollected Chriſt's declaration, that he would, after three days, riſe again; and their cold and ſuſpicious temper led them to expect ſome contrivance on the part of the diſciples to ſupport the reputation of their Lord. Matt. xxvii. 63, 64. The diſciples themſelves, abſorbed by their ſorrow, cloſed their eyes againſt the proſpect of conſolation, miſconceiving, or miſtruſting the aſſurances of Chriſt, which they might conſider as figurative, and incapable of literal accompliſhment.

† John xii. 34.

have

have conſidered the crucifixion as a dark cloud, which overſhadowed a divine ſcheme; and however the glories of their departed Maſter might be expected to break forth in a future life, they muſt have lamented that their preſent expectations were buried in the grave: they muſt have reflected on Chriſt's death as on the departure of one who, however exalted in character, and adorned by virtues; however commiſſioned by God for benevolent purpoſes, had fallen a ſacrifice to the miſtaken, or miſguided paſſions of thoſe who underſtood not, and refuſed the excellence of his doctrine. The knowledge of the divine plan was only gradually imparted; nor did the apoſtles comprehend the myſtery of Chriſt's death till he himſelf, after his reſurrection, had "opened their underſtanding that they might underſtand the ſcriptures;" and ſhewed them, that "thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day," and breathed on them that they might receive the Holy Ghoſt*, who ſhould conduct them to all wiſdom.

* John xx. 22.

This

This gradual communication of knowledge to the diſciples of our Lord, while it led them, by inſenſible degrees, to a firm and perfect faith, was neceſſary, as it admitted, by ſucceſſive revelations, a light too powerful for inſtantaneous comprehenſion. Very ſubſtantial proofs, likewiſe, were furniſhed, by the incredulity of the diſciples, to demonſtrate that they were not deluded by any ſuperſtitious fancies; and to ſhew, that the evidence on which they built their convictions was ſatisfactory and irrefragable; and when we conſider under what variety of circumſtances, and upon what different occaſions our Saviour was ſeen after his reſurrection, it is impoſſible to queſtion the certainty of that event.

It may be proper, in conformity to the cuſtomary diviſion of the ſubject, to contemplate the reſurrection of Chriſt under two points of view; firſt, as bearing a glorious and conſummate teſtimony to the truth of our religion; and, ſecondly, as affording a poſitive and ſatisfactory aſſurance of our own reſurrection to an inheritance of its rewards. In the preſent diſcourſe, it may be ſufficient to examine it in the light of bearing evidence

to

to the truth of chriſtianity, reſerving the other conſideration as a ſubject of future diſcuſſion.

In the firſt point of view which we purpoſe to contemplate, it is obvious to remark, that the reſurrection of Chriſt illuſtrates the inſpiration of the ſacred writings, as well of the Old, as of the New Teſtament, inaſmuch as it exhibits a ſtriking accompliſhment of prophecy.

When our Saviour converſed with his wondering diſciples, after his reſurrection, till "their hearts burned within them," at the inſtructive energy of his diſcourſe; he pointed out to them that his death and reſurrection were in ſtrict conformity to what was written in the law of Moſes, and in the Prophets, and in the Pſalms, concerning him; expounding, probably, thoſe paſſages which had an eſpecial reference to theſe events: unravelling the ſpiritual alluſions of the law, and unfolding the full import of prophecy.

Doubtleſs, then, he explained to them the connection which ſubſiſted between the two covenants; deſcribing by what admirable contrivance the ordinances and inſtitutions of the law were concerted to be figurative of goſpel appointments; and illuſtrating the reference which

which the diſpenſations of the Jewiſh hiſtory bore to events under the Chriſtian eſtabliſhment; developing the typical character of the Levitical ſacrifices, the prophetic aſpect of ceremonial inſtitutions, the repreſentative nature of hiſtorical relations *.

But ſtill farther, with impreſſive and convincing expoſition, he muſt have referred to the various and ſeemingly incompatible predictions that could be fulfilled in him only, who was God and man, as particularly with reference to his recent ſufferings and reſurrection. He might have obſerved, that David had clearly deſcribed him as to be betrayed by his "familiar friend †;" as circumvented and encompaſſed by the wicked, who ſhould give him "gall to eat ‡," who ſhould "pierce his ſide," and "caſt lots for his veſture." He might have added, that Iſaiah had, in expreſs terms, declared that "the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of all §;" that he ſhould be brought "as a lamb to the ſlaughter," and

* Gen. xxii. 1—18. comp. with Heb. xi. 17—19. Jonah i. 17.

† Pſalm xli. cix and cxix. comp. with Acts i. 16, 21.

‡ Pſalm lxix. 21.

§ Iſaiah liii. 6, 7.

"be

" be cut off out of the land of the living*," that " he ſhould make his grave with the " wicked, and with the rich in his death †, " becauſe (or though) he had done no vio- " lence, neither was any deceit in his " mouth." He might have farther told them, that the Pſalmiſt had foreſhewn that the Lord " would not ſuffer his ſoul to remain in hell, nor his holy one to ſee corruption ‡."

That our Saviour pointed out the completion of prophecy in theſe and other ſignal inſtances §, we have reaſon, from the evangelical accounts, to conclude ‖; and the enlightening influence of the ſpirit ſoon enabled his diſciples to diſcern the full application of the reſt.

The reſurrection of Chriſt afforded ſtill farther a concluſive evidence of the truth of his pretenſions and religion, inaſmuch as it

* Iſaiah liii. 8. Dan. ix. 26.

† Iſaiah liii. 9. comp. with Luke xxiii. 50, 53. Matt. xxvii. 57, 60. Mark xv. 43—46.

‡ Pſalm xvi. Pſalm x. comp. with Acts ii. 27. Acts xiii. 35.

§ See Zechar. xii. 10. comp. with John xix. 37. and Revel. i. 7.

‖ Luke xxiv. 44, 46.

was

was the higheſt and moſt convincing miracle which he diſplayed in teſtimony of his miſſion, and that to which he appealed as to a ratification of his divine character *. It diſplayed, in full perfection, the completion of the Meſſiah's glory; it proved his aſſured claim to the dignity of King †, or victor over death and ſin; and ratified his pretenſions as the appointed Judge of the world, demonſtrating, aſſuredly, to the houſe of Iſrael, that God had made that ſame Jeſus, whom they had crucified, both "Lord and Chriſt."

* Matt. xii. 38, 39. Luke xvi. 27. xxxi. Deut. xviii. 21, 22.

† Juſtin Martyr aſſerts, that after the words "ſay among the Heathen that the Lord reigneth," in Pſalm xvi. 10. formerly followed "from the croſs or wood," απο του ξυλου, and that the Jews deſignedly omitted them; and other fathers cite the text with theſe words. Vide Tertul. adv. Jud. c. xi. Gregor. Mag. Hom. IV. ſup. Ezec. fol. 261. Leo. Serm. IV. de Paſſion Dom. p. 50. Ambroſ. in 1 Cor. 15. col. 400. Scriptor. Lib. de Mont. Sina & Sion. Cypriano Olim. aſcript. p. 37. and Auguſtin. Arnob. & Caſſiod. Com. but the words are not in the Vulgate, nor are noticed by Origen or Jerome, nor in any Hebrew or Greek manuſcript; and therefore, probably, they were not genuine, ſince we have no grounds to believe that the Jews deſignedly mutilated their ſcriptures. Vid. Juſtin Martyr, Dial. p. 294. Edit. Thirlb.

To raiſe up the dead is, we know, the excluſive prerogative of him who is the ſource of life; of him who can "kill and make "alive*;" to whom alone the "iſſues of "life" belong †. "The God of Abraham "it was who raiſed Chriſt‡: Chriſt, who was himſelf "the Prince of life," and who as One with the God of Abraham, raiſed himſelf; and who, as God, declared that he had power "to lay down his life, and to "take it up§;" who liveth, and was dead; who holdeth the keys of hell and death ‖.

When the laſt glorious and affecting teſtimony of Chriſt's power was diſplayed in his reſurrection from the grave, and when the exalted dignity of his character was evidenced by his viſible aſcenſion into heaven, his diſciples received every conviction of the truth of his claims and pretenſions. However they might have been diſconcerted at the humility of his firſt appearance, and at the termination of his righteous courſe, yet every doubt and fearful anxiety was diſperſed before this glo-

* Deut. xxxii. 39. 1 Sam. ii. 6. † Pſal. lxviii. 20. ‡ Acts iii. 13, 15. § John x. 18.
‖ Revel. i. 18.

rious

rious diſplay of the immortality and attributes of their Lord.

Then it was that confirmed likewiſe, by the influence of the Holy Ghoſt, they were inſpired with a zeal which no hardſhips could deter, no difficulties appal; then it was, as Clement, Biſhop of Rome, expreſſes himſelf, that "receiving the commandments, "and being confirmed in the faith by the "reſurrection of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and "truſting in the word of God, they went "out in the confidence of the Holy Spirit, "preaching that the kingdom of God was "about to come *." Then it was that they encountered all trials and mockeries, and laboured, with unremitted induſtry, to effectuate the converſion of the world. Hence it proceeded, that amidſt the ſoreſt perſecutions, they maintained an unſubdued conſtancy, and preſented, to the admiration of mankind, illuſtrious examples of every Chriſtian virtue; and that with meekneſs and patience; "though deſtitute, afflicted, and tor-"mented," they maintained the cauſe of a crucified Saviour in oppoſition to every earthly

* Clemen. Rom. Epiſt. I. ad Corin. xlii.

power;

power; and many were the ſaints and martyrs who breathed out their laſt words in acknowledgment of Chriſt's faith; and diſplayed, in their laſt moments, an animated reverence for the charitable and forgiving precepts which he had taught.

The religion of Chriſt, like its Author, was weak and lowly at its firſt appearance. Preached under humble circumſtances, it ſhed only a faint and obſtructed light over the circumſcribed limits of Judea. But when its great Teacher had completely defined its principles, and fully ratified its proofs, it roſe, as Chriſt roſe, from the grave of darkneſs to exaltation and glory. Though Chriſt himſelf had perſonally diſappeared, yet did his ſacred influence continue to preſide over, and aſſiſt the intereſts of his conſecrated church *. By the unfolding of the prophetic teſtimonies to which it appealed, a divine luſtre was reflected on its cauſe. By the ſigns which were wrought as credentials, and by the ſanctions which co-operated with, and confirmed the preaching of Chriſt's diſciples, an irreſiſtible effect was given to their labours,

* Matt. xxxviii. 20. Mark xvi. 20.

while the excellent contexture which it diſplayed, and the ſolid virtues which it produced, enſured a firm foundation for its eſtabliſhment.

Many, however, were the impediments which ignorance and prejudice raiſed up to obſtruct its progreſs; and the novelty and importance of its doctrines excited ſuſpicion, doubts, and incredulity among the learned and arrogant profeſſors of human wiſdom.

A reſurrection of the body from the grave, was an event ſo unprecedented to thoſe who had not witneſſed the miracles of Chriſt: ſo repugnant to the experience, and ſo ſuperior to the contrivance and power of mankind, that the doctrine might well be expected to be liſtened to with diſtruſt. To the Greeks, who proudly aſpired to the fame of philoſophical knowledge, the doctrine appeared fooliſhneſs *; though, had they deliberately reflected on the infallible proofs and teſtimonies on which it reſted, had they impartially weighed its accumulated evidence; they could not well have rejected its belief.

Had they conſidered that Chriſt, after his reſurrection, had appeared, at different inter-

* 1 Cor. i. 23. Acts xvii. 18.

vals,

vals, and on appointed occaſions, and for a continuance of forty days, to perſons intimately acquainted with him, and to above five hundred perſons at one time *; that the magiſtrates were not in concert with the diſciples, but, on the contrary, watched their proceedings with the moſt vigilant jealouſy; that the ſoldiers, who had been appointed to guard the ſepulchre, had ſhewed theſe things to the high prieſt, confirming the teſtimony of the apoſtles alike, where they agreed with, or with prepoſterous inconſiſtency differed from their account; had they reflected that the graves had even been opened, and that the bodies of ſaints which ſlept aroſe, and appeared to many; that the aſcenſion of our Lord was viſible and glorious at the time when the minds of the people were raiſed to attend to, and earneſt to examine the truth of the reports that were in circulation; that it happened at Jeruſalem, when crouded by

* John xv. 27. Acts i. 21, 22. St. Paul ſays, that Chriſt appeared to above 500 perſons at once, which, poſſibly, was at the time when he appeared to the diſciples in Galilee. Matt. xxviii. 16, 17. Some of thoſe perſons were living when St. Paul's 1ſt Epiſtle to the Corinthians was written. A. D. 57. See 1 Cor. xv. 6.

Jews of all nations, who came up from every part to keep the paſſover; had they farther remarked, that the diſciples, who were eye witneſſes of his Majeſty, uniformly, peremptorily, and without wavering, or paying regard to idle objections, perſiſted in their account, which was involved with other facts eaſily to be aſcertained, and complicated with characters of men ſtill living; that the diſciples were ſimple and unlettered men, profeſſing doctrines abhorrent from all falſhood *, and inconſiſtent with all enthuſiaſm, or human artifice, who could not be intereſted for the ſucceſs of their preaching in the preſent life; in which alone, if they had hope, they were ſenſible that they were, of all men, moſt wretched †; who, unleſs they were perſuaded that they were hereafter to aſcend to their crucified Lord, would never have ſo gladly deſpiſed the preſent life, in ſupport of a religion in which they were taught to expect hazard, and perſecution, and death; and for which they were prepared, and taught to lay down their lives in imitation of their Redeemer and Lord. Had theſe unconverted

* Epheſ. iv. 25. Coloſ. iii. 9. Rom. iii. 8.

† 1 Cor. xv. 19. 2 Cor. iv. 11.

reaſoners

reaſoners obſerved ſtill farther, that the account was not refuted, that the apoſtles, with great power and confidence, had given witneſs to the reſurrection *, preaching, in various languages, with inſpired tongues, and performing great miracles; that St. Paul, from whom they immediately derived the doctrine, was himſelf miraculouſly converted by the addreſs of Chriſt to him, and from a zealous perſecutor, had become a ſtrenuous preacher of his religion: teaching, boldly, its doctrines with more than human eloquence, and with a force of reaſoning greater than they had admired in their nobleſt orators: had they fairly and candidly conſidered theſe things, they could not, one would conceive, have remained incredulous. Numbers, indeed, were converted by reflecting on them.

To us, who accept the hiſtory of this great event as ſubſtantiated by the concurrent teſtimonies of every evangeliſt, it muſt be received as the ſtamp and unqueſtionable proof of the divine character of Chriſt, and the

* Acts v. 32. xiv. 3. iv. 16, 30, 33. iii. 6. Joſeph. Ant. Lib. XVIII. c. iv.

full and conclusive argument of the truth of his religion. After Moses and the prophets, Christ is risen from the dead, and no higher miracle can be shewn, no greater or more solemn testimony can be given.

DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

For EASTER DAY.

PART II.

1 COR. XV. 20.

Now is Chriſt riſen from the dead, and become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept.

IN a preceding diſcourſe, the reſurrection of Chriſt was conſidered as bearing irreſiſtible evidence to the truth of chriſtianity; it remains to contemplate it in another point of view, as it affords an aſſurance of our own reſurrection to immortal life.

Chriſt, who is the head of that incorporated ſociety, which is ſtyled the church, by riſing from the dead, furniſhed a pledge

and earneſt of the future reſtoration of its members *. He became "the firſt fruits "of them that ſlept," and illuſtrated the poſſibility and actual effect of that re-union to which the devout diſciples of chriſtianity aſpire.

While the immortality of the ſoul was a truth to be collected from the light of reaſon, the ſecret intimations of the human mind, or the popular traditions of mankind, it was rather an indiſtinct expectation than a full perſuaſion. The anxious hopes, and the ſolicitous apprehenſions of men, buſied themſelves, indeed, in the ſearch after whatever might produce confidence in this expectation. The ſpeculations of reaſon adverted with pleaſure to the univerſal aſſent of all nations, to the analogy of natural things, and to the acknowledged attributes of the ſupreme Being. The Heathen philoſophers dwelt, with ſatisfaction †, on the aſcendant and controlling power of the intellect over the body, on its ſeparate and independent nature, and reflections, on its diſtinct powers and feelings, its

* 1 John ii. 22.

† Cicero Quæſtion. Tuſculan. de Senectute.

faculties,

faculties, and capability of improvement, and its aſpiring after perfection and immortality; yet however general were the perſuaſion of the future exiſtence of the ſoul, it was rather a conſolatory ſoothing hope than a firm-rooted conviction, and a conſtant incitement to virtue in the Heathen world. It was mingled with doubts, and entangled with difficulties, relative to the firſt principles and intended deſtiny of the ſoul; it generated crude and fanciful theories concerning its nature, its pre-exiſtence and future migration into other bodies. It was not a principle of reſignation, nor did it promote the cultivation of permanent excellencies; for it was not accompanied by a full conviction of future rewards; ſince philoſophy often ridiculed the notion; and the vulgar, who lamented deceaſed merit as annihilated and loſt, hung up cypreſs, or ſtrewed it on the grave of departed friends, in remembrance of virtues no more to flouriſh *.

Among

* Durand's Ritual, L. VII. c. xxxv. The doctrine of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments was familiarly inculcated, it is true, among the Heathens, but it was not firmly and generally believed. The learned, who had no conception

Among the Jews, who had no ſtipulated and covenanted promiſe of immortality annexed to an obſervance of their law, though they had frequent intimations, and entertained earneſt hopes of a future life, the actual forms and condition of immortality were not fully underſtood *; and ſuch as looked to the enjoyment of a future ſtate, muſt have grounded their expectations on the general exhortations of the prophets, which, while they held out the proſpect of another life, only figuratively pourtrayed its bleſſings, and obſcurely intimated the reſurrection of the body †.

The

conception of the reſurrection of the body, deſpiſed the vulgar notions and poetical fables on the ſubject of a future ſtate, in which bodily actions were incoherently attributed to departed ſpirits. Some openly ridiculed them, and others ſupported them only as fancies uſeful to ſociety; and a doctrine ſometimes ridiculed, and ſeldom defended with ſincerity, could not eſtabliſh itſelf to any great extent, even with the vulgar. Vid. Juvenal. Sat. XIII. l. 33—37. Sat. II. l. 149—152. Cicero. Tuſcul. Diſput. Lib. I. c. v. vi. Plin. II. 7. Acts xvii. 32.

* Luke x. 25.

† See Ezekiel's viſion of the reſurrection of dry bones, chap. xxxvii. Enoch and Elijah's tranſlation might have led

The direct aſſurance of the reſtoration of the body to participate with the ſoul the glories of immortality, was the peculiar and excluſive ſanction of the goſpel; and the actual illuſtration of the doctrine, in the caſe of our Saviour, afforded the moſt lively and affecting demonſtration of the power and intentions of God *. Till Chriſt had riſen, there was ſtill diſtruſt, though his religion had revealed its promiſes; for we have ſeen † that the gloom and apprehenſion of doubt hung over the ſepulchre of our Lord. It was Chriſt's own reſurrection which ratified his aſſurance of giving us a title to that life, which, by his oblation of himſelf, he had made deſirable, till when the Jews incredulouſly denied his full power ‡, and even his beloved and confidential friends expected not his reſtoration.

Inaſmuch as Chriſt is deſcribed to be man as well as God, a perfect compoſition of body

led to a ſuppoſition of the future exiſtence of the body. Job ſeems to have conceived ſome idea of the doctrine. Job xxix. 26. xiv. 12,

* Philip iii. 21.

† In the preceding diſcourſe.

‡ Matt. xxvii. 42. "He ſaved others; himſelf he "cannot ſave."

and

and ſoul, independently of that divine ſpirit to which the human nature was annexed, we muſt conſider his death as a departure of the ſoul from the body: as a ſeparation of the immortal and immaterial ſpirit from the ſubſtance of the fleſh, which, however, in the caſe of Chriſt, miraculouſly preſerved from corruption, was in itſelf of a periſhable nature. By the ſeparation of theſe, which took place on the croſs, when our Saviour gave up the ghoſt, animation ceaſed, and the body became a lifeleſs maſs: its powers were ſtopped; its refinement of ſenſe was loſt. The ſoul of our Saviour took its flight to thoſe regions of intermediate exiſtence, which he ſtyled Paradiſe *, and in which, probably, departed ſouls

* Luke xxiii. 43. Dan. xii. 2. Deut. xxxi. 16. Job iii. 13. Pſalm lxxvi. 5. Acts ii. 34. Revel. vi. 9. The ſouls under the altar, here mentioned, are, poſſibly, the ſouls in a ſtate of ſeparate exiſtence. See Poli Synop. Here we ſuppoſe Chriſt to have gone, when we ſay that he deſcended into hell. Even the devils are reſerved for the day of judgment; and the guilty, doubtleſs, in a ſeparate ſtate, anticipate their future condemnation. The doctrine of purgatory, and that of prayers for the dead, are derived, probably, from the belief in a ſtate of ſeparate exiſtence. Juſtin Martyr, in the place cited in the preceding diſcourſe, ſays, that the Jews reſcinded

ſouls remain in conſcious exiſtence, and foretaſte of that happineſs or miſery which, after an univerſal and impartial judgment, ſhall characteriſe their future doom.

That the death of Chriſt was a ſeparation of the ſoul and body, we have grounds to conclude even from the prophetic declaration

ſcinded the following paſſage from Jeremiah: "The "Lord God of Iſrael remembered his dead who ſlept in "the earth of the ſepulchre, and deſcended to them that "he might preach his ſalvation." Juſtin Martyr, Dial. I. p. 294. Edit. Thirlb. 1 Pet. iv. 6. The paſſage is alſo cited ſeveral times by Irenæus; and once by him as the words of Iſaiah. Vid. Iren. L. III. c. xxiii. L. IV. c. xxxix. lxvi. and L. V. c. xxxi. Edit. Grabe. Vid. alſo Clerici. Hiſt. Eccleſ. p. 526. but we cannot avail ourſelves of the paſſage, as, probably, it was not genuine, ſince it was almoſt impoſſible for the Jews to mutilate their ſcriptures with ſucceſs, as copies were ſo multiplied. The fathers often cite inaccurately; perhaps, ſometimes, from traditional prophecies. Irenæus relates it as a tradition that Enoch and Elias were tranſlated to the Paradiſe from which Adam was expelled, and that St. Paul "was "caught up" there. Lib. V. p. 405. The later fathers adopted the tradition, though Middleton treats the opinion as falſe and abſurd: and the fathers and primitive Chriſtians in general believed that the ſoul went to a ſeparate ſtate, as is evident from the ancient Liturgies. See alſo Ambroſe. Orat. de Valent. Chryſoſt. Homil. 23. in Matt. Epiphan. Hæres 75. Chryſoſt. Lit. in Matt.

of

of the Pſalmiſt, who foreſhewed that "God "would not leave the ſoul of Chriſt in hell, "neither ſuffer his Holy One to ſee corrup-"tion;" for, as this prediction cannot be ſuppoſed to aſſert two identical propoſitions, and to refer only to the body of our Lord, it muſt be conſidered as deſcriptive of the human character of Chriſt, conſiſting of ſoul and body*. The ſoul was not finally ſuffered to continue in a ſtate of ſeparate exiſtence, whatever that ſtate might be; neither was the body permitted to remain in the grave, by which it "could not be held," or to ſuffer the corruption, to which its periſhable materials were obnoxious.

It has been a ſubject of important conſideration, and generally admitted by men moſt converſant with ſcripture, and moſt competent to decide in ſuch diſquiſitions, that notwithſtanding the diſſolution which took place between the human ſoul and body of Chriſt, each continued to maintain the hypoſtatical union with the divine nature; and the myſterious conjunction of the divine nature, and the mortal body, after ſeparation from the

* Pſalm xvi. 10. Acts ii. 31. xiii. 34.

ſoul,

ſoul, is no more inconſiſtent with the perfections of God, or inconceivable to human reaſon, than the general doctrine of the incarnation and two-fold nature of Chriſt *.

It is unqueſtionable, both from reaſon and revelation, that life or animation is the reſult of the union of the ſoul and body. When God "breathed into man the breath of "life," he became, at the ſame time, "a "living ſoul." The communication of an immortal ſpirit was the principle or cauſe of vitality †.

The conviction of the diſtinct nature and ſeparate exiſtence of the ſoul has been almoſt univerſally held by thoſe who have believed its immortality, and reflected on its powers and faculties. Among the Jews, the union of the ſoul and body muſt have been conſidered as the cauſe of life to the latter; and the ſacred writers authoriſe us to abide by that opinion. When the child, reſtored by Elijah, revived, his ſoul is ſaid to have "come to him again ‡." St. Luke, ſpeak-

* See Barrow's Sermon on the Reſurrection.

† Gen. ii. 7. James ii. 26. Pſalm civ. 29.

‡ 1 Kings xvii. 22.

ing

ing of the maiden raiſed up by Chriſt, ſays, "her ſpirit came again *;" the immortal ſpirit, which could not die, came again to re-animate her frame. St. Stephen, after a viſion of Chriſt, in imitation of his bleſſed Maſter, commended his ſpirit to God at his death †.

It would be extraneous to our preſent purpoſe to entangle ourſelves with the various opinions that have been maintained with reſpect to the nature of the ſoul, as to its conſtituent principles. The ſcriptures give us no information with regard to its eſſence, becauſe, perhaps, with our reſtricted faculties here on earth, where "we ſee through a "glaſs darkly," and can judge of immaterial things only by abſtraction, we are incapable of comprehending its character.

What we collect, however, from reaſon, as diſpaſſionately exerciſed is, that the ſoul is of a character eſſentially different from that of a material ſubſtance, as endowed with faculties of conſciouſneſs, perception, and reaſoning, and capable of qualities and perfections of an unperiſhable nature. It does

* Luke viii. 55. † Acts vii. 55. Luke xxiii. 46.

not

not change with the body, which undergoes daily mutations; ſince, if it did, it could not retain the memory of events which have happened to the body, of which the parts have periſhed, and the ſenſes have decayed. It exhibits a manifeſt ſuperiority in its inclinations and powers. It checks the propenſities, rejects the ſolicitations, and regulates the tendencies of the body. It derives exiſtence from a divine ſource, and is independent of human power. It originates its own motions, and exerciſes its unfettered will. It exerts its powers of fancy, of judgment, and of reflection, availing itſelf of thoſe objects which are preſented to it by the ſenſes, yet ranging in its unconfined ſpeculations, beyond the boundaries of the material world, and graſping, with comprehenſive intellect, the chain and circumſtances of the paſt, the preſent, and the future time. It unravels, by ſucceſſive deductions, the contexture of its own excellencies; and contemplates, in its elevated flights, the myſteries and wiſdom of revelation, the heavenly things of faith, the attributes and perfections of God.

It appears farther, that if, in infancy, the ſoul be inactive, it is becauſe few ſubjects are ſug-

geſted to its reflections by the ſenſes yet feeble; and that its energies are diſplayed, as encreaſing objects furniſh employment for its excited powers; that, in ſleep, it is engaged on ſubjects of reflection, and that its imaginations are then rapid and unchained, though the impreſſions of them, which the memory retains, are often faint, confuſed, and imperfect. It is independent of every part of the body, which it controls; and its agency diſappears only when the vital connection ceaſes. It is not injured, though a member periſh. It is not darkened, though an external faculty ſhould fail. It improves often amidſt the impairment of ſenſes, and riſes above the conſumption of bodily decline. It is not enfeebled by the decay of outward ſtrength, and totters not with the debility of age, though its powers appear to faulter with the imbecillity of its organs. Its energies may be eclipſed, but not extinguiſhed: its faculties deranged, but not deſtroyed. Its excellencies and endowments are diſcovered under the diſadvantages of perſonal deformity. It ſhines bright amidſt the pains of diſeaſe; and if, on approaching death, it hath adverted to the ſufferings of the body, it hath often been but to deſpiſe their

their influence. It profits by what it receives, and brings forth adequate and proportioned fruits. It purſues its acquired knowledge to its utmoſt limits. As it approaches eternity, it ſeems to catch the gleams of future light, and hath often exulted with ſomewhat of prophetic anticipation. It is the oracle of human wiſdom, and ſuſceptible of the impreſſions of divine knowledge. Its powers increaſe with its acquiſitions; and, in a future life, it will, doubtleſs, diſplay greater faculties, and partake of the intereſt of ſurrounding ſcenes.

Numberleſs proofs of the immateriality of the ſoul, and, conſequently, of its immortality *, ariſe in every man's mind; and though

* The following unanſwerable argument of Dr. Clarke, in proof of the immateriality and natural immortality of the ſoul, though well known, deſerves to be repeated. "That the ſoul cannot be material," he ſays, "is demonſtrable, from the ſingle conſideration even of bare ſenſe and conſciouſneſs itſelf: for matter being a diviſible ſubſtance, conſiſting always of ſeparable, nay, of actually ſeparate and diſtinct parts, it is plain, unleſs it were eſſentially conſcious, (in which caſe every particle of matter muſt conſiſt of innumerable, ſeparate, and diſtinct conſciouſneſſes) no ſyſtem of it, in any poſſible compoſition or diviſion, can be an individual conſcious being; for ſuppoſe three, or three hundred particles of matter at a mile, or

though theſe, as ſeparately ſuggeſted, are often individually forgotten, yet the influence of their collective operation remains, and confirms our convictions: hence we all know, and we all feel, that the ſoul is diſtinct from the body; the righteous, with humble and joyful confidence; the wicked, with trembling and reluctant apprehenſion. Hence has it been the almoſt univerſal creed, at all times, and in all countries, though ſpeculative philoſophy hath ſometimes laboured to

any given diſtance, one from another, is it poſſible that all thoſe ſeparate parts ſhould, in that ſtate, be one individual conſcious being? Suppoſe, then, all theſe particles brought together, into one ſyſtem, ſo as to touch one another, will they, thereby, or by any motion or compoſition whatſoever, become any whit leſs truly diſtinct beings than they were at the greateſt diſtance? How then can their being diſpoſed, in any poſſible ſyſtem, make them one individual conſcious being? If you ſuppoſe God, by his infinite power, ſuperadding conſciouſneſs to the united particles, yet ſtill thoſe particles being really and neceſſarily as diſtinct beings as ever, cannot be themſelves the ſubject in which that individual conſciouſneſs inheres; but the conſciouſneſs can only be ſuperadded by the addition of ſomething, which, in all the particles, muſt ſtill itſelf be but one individual being. The ſoul, therefore, whoſe power of thinking is, undeniably, one individual conſciouſneſs, cannot, poſſibly, be a material ſubſtance."

contradict

contradict the doctrine by ſubtle refinements, which have been refuted even on the grounds of metaphyſical reaſoning *.

* It has been obſerved, that Dr. Prieſtley, to prove that the ſoul is material, rejects the common and true deſcription of matter as an abſolutely impenetrable, inert ſubſtance; and, by ſpiritualiſing matter, endeavours to repreſent it as capable of perception and thought. He maintains alſo, that ſince the powers of perception and thought have never been obſerved by us to exiſt but in conjunction with a certain organized ſyſtem of matter, thoſe powers muſt neceſſarily depend upon ſuch a ſyſtem; as if connection proved dependance. It would, on the contrary, be more reaſonable to argue, that as matter exiſts without thought and perception, it cannot, by any modification, be the cauſe of them. He admits alſo, that God is immaterial; of whom, certainly, perception and thought are attributes. It is, beſides, difficult to conceive how any man can be a materialiſt when he conſiders the paſſages which prove the pre-exiſtence of Chriſt; John viii. 58. the general doctrine of ſpirits; Luke xxiv. 39. the diſtinct and immortal nature of the ſoul, and its ſeparate exiſtence in a future ſtate, Matt. x. 28. Acts vii. 59. Heb. iv. 12. Revel. vi. 9. We do not therefore wonder, that, as Mr. Gibbon obſerves, the miraculous conception is one of the laſt articles which Dr. Prieſtley has curtailed from his ſcanty Creed; and we ſuſpect, that the notion of the materiality of the ſoul was taken up, becauſe, as Dr. Prieſtley remarks, it is eminently ſubſervient to the doctrine of the proper, or mere humanity of Chriſt. See Prieſtley on Matter and Spirit.

It is happy for us, that our belief in the immortality of the ſoul, and of its future reunion to the body, reſts not, however, on theſe grounds, but that our faith is built on the firm and immoveable baſis of the divine word; on the poſitive aſſurance of that Lord, who roſe from the grave that he might authenticate a religion grounded on the promiſes of a future reſurrection and judgment *.

By that revelation which Chriſt ſealed with his blood, and ratified by his reſurrection, we are taught, that the ſoul is an immortal ſpirit, breathed into us by God himſelf, and marked with the impreſſion of his image; that it is eſſentially different from the vital principle, which animates the brute creation; ſince animals are incapable of reaſoning, having no underſtanding, and enjoying only ſuch ſenſations as reſult from an organical diſpoſition of body †, and acting inſtinctively, as occaſion and wants ſuggeſt. That it differs from it, in its final deſtination, inaſmuch as "the ſpirit of man goeth upward, and the "ſpirit of beaſt downward to the earth ‡."

* Acts xvii. 31. † Pſalm xxxii. 9.
‡ Eccleſ. iii. 21.

The

The inſpired writers uniformly ſpeak of it as a diſtinct ſubſtance over which man hath no power *, and to which the body is to be united at the reſurrection of the dead.

Of the immortality of the ſoul, therefore, we can entertain no doubt; of an immortality, which ſhall ſurvive the deſtruction of this material world, and all its ſcenery of diverſified yet periſhable beauty; "when "the faſhion of this world ſhall paſs away †;" of an immortality originally derived from God, and dependent on his will, but incapable of deſtruction, except from that omnipotence which alone is of neceſſary and independent exiſtence ‡; and therefore deſtined to flouriſh with undiminiſhed and unfaded luſtre to eternity.

That at the general reſurrection to a final judgment the ſoul ſhall be re-united to the body, is a doctrine equally grounded on the infallible word of God §. Of the poſſibility of ſuch re-union by the power of omnipotence, no reaſonable doubt can be enter-

* Matt. x. 28. Luke xii. 4, 5. 31. 42—44. 53, 54. Philipp. iii. 21.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

† 1 Cor. vii.

§ 1 Cor. xv.

tained; and though, in the caſe of Chriſt, no corruption of the body had taken place, it will not be thought more ſtrange by thoſe duly impreſſed with a ſenſe of God's power, that he ſhould raiſe the dead: that he who firſt compoſed ſhould collect and again build up the ſcattered materials of every earthly frame: that he who, in ſublime language, deſcribed himſelf as "the reſurrection and "the life," and who raiſed up himſelf from the dead *, ſhould, "when he cometh in the "clouds of heaven, with power and great "glory, gather together his elect from the "four winds, from one end of heaven to "the other †.

The ſpeculative difficulties which have been raiſed in objection to this reſurrection, have been ſufficiently refuted; but the ſpirit of ſober enquiry, which reſts confidently on the unlimited power of God, will not range in queſt of difficulties which originate in our own

* Acts xxvi. 8. Rom. viii. 11. God is here ſaid to raiſe the dead, and to have raiſed up Jeſus from the dead; and yet the ſame power is aſcribed to Chriſt, who muſt therefore be God. John xi. 25. 1 Theſſ. iv. 14—17. 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

† Matt. xxiv. 30, 31.

miſcon-

miſconceptions. Conſcious, that in the conſideration of thoſe earthly objects which ſurround him, there are many particulars which he is unable to underſtand, and of which the conſiſtency is not obvious, he will not think that the difficulties which accompany a revealed doctrine, conſtitute a reaſonable objection to its acceptation.

It is related, to the diſcredit of Heathen wiſdom and charity, that the enemies of chriſtianity, having burnt the bodies of the martyrs whom they perſecuted, caſt their aſhes into the river, that they might be diſperſed by the winds, and ſeparately loſt in the ocean, to which they were hurried by the ſtreams, and that ſo all expectation of the reſurrection might be deſtroyed in their ſurviving friends, and in the future diſciples of Chriſt: as if omnipotence were fettered by reſtrictions, and extended not its power over the ſea, which ſhall hereafter "give "up its dead *." In truth, their malevolent deſign was, in every reſpect, defeated and deſpiſed. The unſhaken faith of the primitive diſciples of Chriſt triumphed over ſuch

* Rev. xx. 13.

weak

weak obſtructions; and the early Chriſtians almoſt univerſally believed in the reſurrection of the ſame body, as we collect from their writings, and alſo from many cuſtoms, ſtrongly demonſtrative of that faith, ſince they not only lighted up lamps at the funerals of their friends, and ſung hymns at their graves *, decorated with the unchanging emblems of immortality †, but depoſited their corpſes with the face towards the eaſt, whence they expected their Lord to appear ‡, as, eaſtward from Mount Olivet, he was believed to have aſcended §.

Contemplating, then, the reſurrection of Chriſt, we receive a full demonſtration of

* Chryſoſt. Ser. 4. ad. Heb.

† As ivy, laurel, or roſemary.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 27.

§ Damaſ. Orthod. Fid. Lib. IV. c. xiii. Hence, when we profeſs a belief in Chriſt's reſurrection, we turn, agreeably to antient cuſtom, towards the eaſt. Jewiſh tradition reported Jeſus to have been buried with his face towards the eaſt. See Gregory & Bede in Dic. Sanct. Paſchæ. Tom. VII. Brand's Popul. Antiq. chap. v. p. 44—53. The primitive church, after the example, probably, of the apoſtles, always prayed towards the eaſt; and Chriſt, in ſcripture, is figuratively ſtyled the eaſt, (ανατολη) Luke i. 78. the ſource of light. Cave's Prim. Chriſt. p. 1.. c. ix.

our

our own revival to a future ſtate with the ſame bodies, however purified from that "corruption which inheriteth not the king-"dom of God," to a more glorious nature: however to be changed and faſhioned, like Chriſt's glorious body *, to an immutable perfection.

Chriſt, therefore, when he roſe from the dead, roſe like the ſun of righteouſneſs, "with healing in his wings;" and having, by his reſurrection, regenerated us to a lively hope of an incorruptible inheritance, furniſhed us at once with convictions to enliven faith, and with a conſolation to cheer us in every condition; in afflictions, however depreſſing; in miſeries, however complicated and ſevere.

The ſalvation to which we earneſtly look, is expreſsly aſcribed to a belief in the reſurrection of Chriſt †; as to the concluſion, without which all faith were vain ‡, and as to the completion of the glorious ſcheme of

* 1 Cor. xv. 42—44. 50—54. Philip. iii. 21. John xx. 27. Matt. xxii. 30.

† Rom. x. 6—9. 2 Cor. iv. 14. 1 Theſſ. iv. 14. 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 14, 15, 19, 30, 31.

redemp-

redemption *. By his victory on the croſs, he weakened the dominion, and leſſened the terrors of death, ſhewing it to be the gate of life, not the opening to annihilation, not the paſſport to ſorrow. Hence the apoſtles and martyrs gloried in the croſs, when its miſtaken enemies deemed it diſgraceful and baſe; hence the primitive Chriſtians aſſumed it on all occaſions, and at all times, as the badge of a faith of which they were not aſhamed, till, by continued and encreaſing reverence, it became the object of ſuperſtitious regard. Hence is furniſhed, to the diſciples of Chriſt in all ages, that animating incentive to righteouſneſs, which, if any motive can operate, muſt lead them to the cultivation and practice of righteouſneſs; ſince, "if the "ſpirit of him who raiſed up Jeſus from the "dead dwell in them, he that raiſed up "Chriſt from the dead ſhall alſo quicken "their mortal bodies by his ſpirit †."

The ſpirit of God, of which the fruits and rewards are thus important, is that ſpirit which inſpires and invigorates every good deſign; which excites in us lively piety and

* 1 Cor. xv. 17. † Rom. viii. 11.

active

active benevolence; which, while it inculcates the neceſſity of uniform obedience, occaſionally excites us to a more fervent and earneſt diſplay of righteouſneſs; which reminds us, when we celebrate eſpecial benefits, to demonſtrate eſpecial gratitude, as, upon this occaſion, teaching us that the period of our Lord's reſurrection is peculiarly adapted for the diſplay of religious joy and thankſgiving.

The eve of the day in which the important event was celebrated, was anciently obſerved with ſolemn watchings, by the light of torches, even to the break of day, in expectation of the hour in which the Redeemer of mankind roſe from the grave *. The day itſelf was regarded as a ſeaſon of ſignal charity; and imperial piety was then diſplayed, and conſpicuouſly manifeſted, by the releaſe of priſoners from the graves, and dungeons of deſpair, and by the liberal diſtribution of eleemoſynary aſſiſtance to the wretched †. Religion, while it recalls the ſcenes, and de-

* Nazar. Orat. in Paſch. Orat. 2. 19. 42.

† Euſeb. de Vit. Conſtant. Lib. iv. c. xxii. Chryſoſt. Hom. 20. ad Popul. Antioch. L. IX. Theod. Tit. 38. de Indul. L. VIII.

ſcribes

ſcribes the circumſtances of primitive celebration, bids us bring prepared, and early, offerings to Chriſt's ſepulchre, not "to "anoint the body of our Lord," but to hear of his aſcenſion to the Father; exhorting us, with a view to general amendment, "that, like as Chriſt was raiſed from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life *," ſince "the hour cometh that all that are in their graves ſhall hear his voice; that they that have done good, ſhall come forth to the reſurrection of life; they that have done evil, to the reſurrection of damnation." "Becauſe he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given aſſurance to all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead †."

* Rom. vi. 4. † Acts xvii. 31.

DIS-

DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

MATT. x. 34.

Think not that I am come to ſend peace on earth: I came not to ſend peace, but a ſword.

OUR bleſſed Saviour, when he appointed his diſciples to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, broke out into ſome prophetic deſcriptions of the immediate effects which the introduction of that kingdom would produce. To the apoſtles, he held out the proſpect of journies without cuſtomary proviſion, of rejection from the unworthy, of danger from brutiſh adverſaries, of perſecution and flight, and deſtruction to the body. "And the brother," ſays our Lord, in farther anticipation of impending ſcenes, "ſhall deliver up the brother to "death,

" death, and the father the child, and the " children ſhall riſe up againſt their parents, " and cauſe them to be put to death;" " for " I am come," continues he, " to ſet a " man at variance againſt his father, and the " daughter againſt her mother, and the " daughter-in-law againſt her mother-in- " law *."

Such did Chriſt foreſee would ſometimes be the partial and perverted conſequences of the preaching of that goſpel which was uſhered in by angels as a diſpenſation of good-will towards mankind; ſuch the ſhades and darkneſs which ſhould lower over that law which revealed the precepts of benevolence and Chriſtian charity to mankind. It may be intereſting and inſtructive in pointing out the accompliſhment of theſe predictions in ſome important inſtances, to

* The biſhop of London, in a diſcourſe on the words of the text, maintains that they relate ſolely to the firſt preachers of the goſpel. The learned biſhop does not, however, it is apprehended, mean to reſtrict the ſubſequent paſſages in the chapter merely to the apoſtles. They appear at leaſt to bear a more extended reference to ſome general conſequences which our Lord foreknew would reſult from the paſſions of men on the propagation of chriſtianity.

conſider

conſider from what cauſes it has happened, that a bleſſing ſo real and ſubſtantial as that of chriſtianity, ſhould in ſome reſpects have been made a pretext for diſſenſion, and a ſubject of ſorrow; and farther, it may contribute to vindicate our religion from unjuſt aſperſions, if we demonſtrate that thoſe evils which have been repreſented to flow from chriſtianity, have derived their exiſtence from ſources very remotely different, however unjuſtly traced to that origin, however appearing to roll in one common tide with its effects.

It has been ſuppoſed by ſome commentators, that Chriſt, in the predictions above cited, alluded to the diſcord and wars, as well civil as external, which preceded the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, of which their hiſtorian gives very ſtriking and affecting accounts *, and of which Chriſt himſelf evidently propheſied upon another occaſion, in pathetic deſcription of tribulation, famine, peſtilence and war †; and, doubtleſs, his diſcourſe had ſome reference to theſe national diſtreſſes; ſince the converſion of the Jews,

* Joſeph. Bell. Jud. L. IV.—VII. Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. L. II. c. vi.

† Matt. xxiv.

who embraced chriſtianity, muſt have tended to aggravate, by diſſenſion, the calamities which affected that people; but it muſt alſo be allowed, that our Saviour ſeems principally to allude to thoſe conſequences which ſhould be aſcribed more immediately to the introduction of his religion.

That ſome partial evils did accompany the propagation of chriſtianity, thoſe who are acquainted with its hiſtory will readily admit; though certainly the cavillers againſt religion have as much exaggerated their extent, as they have miſtaken their cauſe, and reaſoned falſely from their exiſtence. The confeſſed adverſaries of revelation have accuſed it of effects which it did not countenance; and have triumphed, with falſe and prophane exultation, when they have pointed out the perverted application of an imparted bleſſing; while the miſtaken or inſidious hiſtorian hath minutely dwelt on the miſconduct, and deliberately aggravated the crimes of thoſe who have profeſſed themſelves the diſciples of Jeſus. The earlier periods of chriſtianity have been induſtriouſly darkened, the ſhades of ignorance and ſuperſtition have been heightened by unfair repreſentation, and whole nations

and

and ages have been condemned with unjuſt and indiſcriminate cenſure. By ſuch contrivance religion has been deſcribed, like the ſuperſtition of antiquity *, as the oppreſſive enemy of mankind, trampling on human life, and inſtigating to evil; and thoſe who accept its revelations as divine, have been unable to conceive why the merciful diſpenſation of God, "clothed as it is with the ſun," and encircled with the radiance of an heavenly crown †, ſhould ſometimes appear to lower with ſo unfavourable an aſpect to mankind. Rejecting, however, ſuch miſrepreſentations, and conſidering religion in its true character, as diſtinct from thoſe towering ſpectres of ſuperſtition which have aſſumed its name, we ſhall find that chriſtianity, above every diſpenſation in the natural or moral world, deſcends from its author with a gentle and friendly influence.

Impartially indeed to ſtate the hiſtory of chriſtianity, would not be to point out the miſtakes and crimes of weak or artful men, who have miſunderſtood its nature, or bor-

* Vide Lucretius, Lib. I. l. 63—102.

† Rev. xii. 1.

rowed its ſemblance, but to exhibit its effect on the general opinion and conduct of thoſe converted to its inſtructions; and then would it be found that its ſeeds, where they have been ſown, have produced good fruits, whatever tares may have been ſcattered with them; and that though it could not entirely change the manners, and extirpate the hurtful paſſions of mankind, it hath improved the temper of every age on which it has ſpread its principles.

The evils which, agreeably to our Saviour's predictions, have been attributed to chriſtianity, are either thoſe which attended its firſt propagation, or thoſe which ſprung up under its eſtabliſhment. Chriſt himſelf, and his firſt followers, ſuffered from the introduction of that ſword of which he predicted the effects, but forbad the uſe*. She even "who had found favour with God," and who was "bleſſed among women," was "pierced" as by "a ſword to the ſoul," as Simeon had foretold by that "fruit of her womb," which the Holy Ghoſt had pronounced to be bleſſed. Jeſus and his apoſtles were attacked with

* Matt. xxvi. 52, 53. Luke xxii. 38.

ſwords

ſwords and with ſtaves. A ſpear pierced the ſide of our Redeemer on the croſs; and they who were ſent forth "harmleſs as doves," to communicate bleſſings, and to impart the tidings of ſalvation to mankind, were taught to expect every deſtruction but that of the ſoul.

Scattered, after the death of their Lord, and filled with the Holy Ghoſt, the diſciples publiſhed, every where, with inſpired zeal and power, the doctrines which they had received. As the proofs and excellency of the goſpel were diſplayed, they excited the admiration of mankind; yet, as its advocates oppoſed predominant intereſts, and attacked inveterate opinions, they ſometimes addreſſed their arguments with little ſucceſs to prejudiced and deluded men. Such as ignorantly or obſtinately rejected the doctrines propoſed for their acceptance, entertained reſentment againſt teachers who attacked their deep-rooted paſſions and immediate intereſts. Here, then, the animated zeal with which they who were baptized into the faith were inſpired, to propagate revelations, on which depended the happineſs and future ſalvation of mankind, ſerved but to generate oppoſition and conteſt. As that zeal was, doubtleſs, alſo in proportion to

the ſtrength of affection which ſubſiſted; and as exertions were more incautious where eſtabliſhed intimacies leſſened reſtraint, domeſtic diſſenſions neceſſarily aroſe, and as Chriſt had foreſeen, "a man's foes were thoſe "of his own houſhold."

The diſſenſions and afflictions which Chriſt and his diſciples experienced, in their endeavours to plant the faith, may be repreſented as the firſt of thoſe evils which reſulted from the introduction of religion. Yet who, with juſtice, ſhall accuſe chriſtianity of evils to which it gave no countenance; who, in contemplating the œconomy of a divine diſpenſation, which is to be completed in a future life, ſhall murmur at the fate of thoſe whoſe virtues were tried, and called forth in affliction, and who "rejoiced, and were exceed-"ingly glad," in the expectation of that "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which had been promiſed in recompence of their well-ſupported ſufferings, conſcious "that their light affliction was but for a "moment; and looking not at the things "which are ſeen, but at the things which "are not ſeen; for the things which are ſeen "are temporal, but the things which are not "ſeen are eternal."

The

The pure and enlightened faith of the goſpel diſdained to mingle its ſervice with the pollutions of idolatry. The firſt and ſelf-exiſting cauſe, and Creator of the univerſe, jealous of his excluſive pre-eminence and rights, accepted not a divided adoration; nor could the worſhip of an holy and ſupreme Lord be reconciled like that of any Heathen deity, with "the bowing down" to other gods. The diſciples of that Teacher, who had ratified the command, "thou ſhalt wor-"ſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt "thou ſerve," could not but ſternly refuſe to aſſociate, in religious communion, with the votaries of Heathen deities. Their unaffected and lively zeal could not but expreſs its determined abhorrence of predominant idolatries, and ſeek to ſhun the contagion of thoſe principles which vitiated the whole conſtitution of ſociety; which mixed themſelves with the general laws and inſtitutions, with the civil arrangements and ſocial habits of life; and which diſplayed their effects in common tranſactions, and in private intercourſe, in every ſcene of public celebration or domeſtic enjoyment. Hence the peculiar ſeverity with which the Roman magiſtrates perſecuted a religion,

which tended totally to ſubvert the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of idolatry, thus intimately incorporated with every regulation of ſociety; and hence the unjuſt and determined averſion with which they viewed chriſtianity *, which daily offended the paſſions, the opinions, and the preſumed intereſts of mankind. Hence the firſt cruelties which they exerciſed on the diſciples of a religion founded by a crucified Lord, and ſtrengthened by the ſufferings and martyrdom of his afflicted diſciples.

Mildneſs and perſuaſion, gentle meaſures, and conciliating argument, were the methods which Chriſt commanded, and which his apoſtles adopted. If the paſſions of mankind were excited, and gradually mingled in the cauſe; if the introduction of light was oppoſed by thoſe who loved darkneſs, are we therefore to complain of the effect of light? Chriſtianity introduced not perſecution into the world, though it became itſelf the object of perſecution. Religious bigotry had uttered its harſh decrees from Heathen tribunals †, and

* Vid. Tacit. Annal. Lib. XV. § 44. Sueton. Nero. c. xvi. Plin. Lib. X. l. 97. Acts xix. 25.

† That the ſpirit of perſecution had introduced itſelf into the Roman councils, notwithſtanding the genius of Polytheiſm

and religious animoſities had excited conteſts among Pagan nations *. If the miniſters of chriſtianity, when raiſed from depreſſion and

Polytheiſm is certain, even from Mr. Gibbon's account, though he by no means ſtates fully the acts of their intolerant power. He repreſents the Emperor Tiberius, and Claudius, to have only ſuppreſſed the dangerous power of the Druids in Gaul; and aſſerts, that the prieſts themſelves, their gods, and their altars, ſubſiſted till the final deſtruction of paganiſm, though "the accurate Suetonius," as he elſewhere ſtiles him, in the place to which Mr. Gibbon refers, ſays of the latter emperor, "Druidarum religionem apud Gallòs penitus abolevit," utterly aboliſhed the religion of the Druids among the Gauls. Sueton. in Claud. § 25. See other proofs of Roman perſecution in the deſtruction of the temple of Iſis and Serapis; in the delegation of 4000 freedmen, to probable deſtruction in Sardinia; and in the expulſion from Italy of all who profeſſed the Hebrew or Egyptian religion, (an act of the juſtice, as Mr. Gibbon ſtiles it of Tiberius) as related by Dion. Caſſius, Lib. XL. p. 252. and Tacitus Annal. c. ii. § 85. See Decline and Fall of Rom Emp. Vol. I. c. ii. See alſo Cicero de Legib. II. 8.

* See Juvenal's 15th Satire, where, in the exceſſes and cannibal fury of ſome Egyptian bigots, againſt which Juvenal inveighs with the moſt ſpirited indignation, we may find what Mr. Gibbon calls "ſome obſcure traces of an intolerant ſpirit." The Magi, in the eaſt, often ſhewed a perſecuting temper.

contempt,

contempt, ſometimes practiſed a ſeverity which they had been taught *; if its protectors in the confidence of earthly power preſcribed its acceptance in a tone too imperious; if, in diſregard of the precepts of their divine Maſter, they ſometimes employed the ſecular arm where ſpiritual weapons alone ſhould have been employed, are we to forget that religion is not reſponſible for a conduct which it condemned? Such miſchief aroſe, not becauſe chriſtianity was introduced, but becauſe its true ſpirit was weakened or obſcured.

The chief perſecutions which have been carried on in the name of Chriſt, have been

* See Biſhop Porteus's Twelfth Sermon, p. 273. Even Mr. Voltaire, in ſpeaking of ſome perſecution, which the Chriſtians carried on from reſentment in Syria and Paleſtine, ſays, that Ammianus Marcellinus, who deſcribes the perſecution, does not notice their great virtues which they had diſplayed. "Il y avoit de grandes "vertus qu'Ammian ne remarque pas; elles ſont preſque "toujours cachées, ſur-tout à des yeux ennemis; et les "vices eclatent. Eſſai ſur l'Hiſtoire generale." Vol. I. c. v. See alſo Livy, Lib. IV. c. xxx. Lib. XXVI. c. i. Lib. XXXIX. c. xvi. Dion. Caſſius, Lib. LII. and Biſhop Watſon's Apol. for Chriſtianity, annexed to ſermons, p. 338.

thoſe excited by a ſuperſtitious and corrupted church *; and by that antichriſtian power, which was prophetically characteriſed as "drunken with the blood of the ſaints." The pure and conſiderate precepts of our Lord abjure coercive and oppreſſive conduct; and where his church has been reformed to its true principles, all intolerant and compulſive meaſures have been condemned and abhorred.

In the growth and extenſion of that power which gradually roſe into Papal pre-eminence, and ſecular dominion, and which erected a ſuperſtition of unmeaning ceremonies and pernicious tenets, on the ruins of the true faith, we behold not the operation of religion, but the crafty deſigns and ſucceſsful ambition of unrighteous men, aſſuming the ſpecious and attractive name of chriſtianity, while they cloſed the volume of its laws, veiling their unhallowed paſſions under the pretenſions and mantle of apparent piety. Had

* As thoſe directed againſt the Waldenſes and Albigenſes; thoſe againſt the Jews and Moors, (which, in the latter inſtance, were ſtimulated by political conſiderations. See Watſon's Philip II. Vol. I. B. IX.) and thoſe deſigned to promote the re-eſtabliſhment of popery in this country. See Revel. xvii. 6.

chriſtianity

chriſtianity been unknown, ſome pretended revelations might have been publiſhed by crafty and ambitious men, and the inventions of impoſture have been diſcloſed to aſſiſt the exertion of paſſions that panted for gratification. Such, in the times of paganiſm, often were contrived: ſuch, in other countries, and in later periods, were fabricated and impoſed by an enterpriſing and aſpiring conqueror, with deſign to facilitate the eſtabliſhment of an earthly empire.

Let the haſty and ſuperficial enquirer declaim againſt the religion of Chriſt, when he contemplates the folly and enthuſiaſm of thoſe who enliſted in confederate attempts, and unfolded the banners of the croſs, for the recovery of that land on which the Redeemer of mankind converſed and was crucified *; or when, in later times, he conſiders the

* Biſhop Porteus's twelfth Sermon, p. 286. Robertſon, in another point of view, repreſents many beneficial effects to have been produced to Europe by the Cruſades, which opened an intercourſe with countries where the knowledge of many uſeful arts and improvements, of civilization and commerce, were preſerved, an acquaintance which effected ſalutary and moſt important changes in the property and manners, and oppreſſive govern-

the civil diſſenſions, the unreſtrained perſecutions, or the intemperate enterpriſes * which have been carried on under the name of Chriſt, and under the pretence of eſtabliſhing his faith. In theſe, the conſiderate mind will diſcover rather the lurking paſſions and ſecret luſts, that the corruption of a depraved nature generated; which, in barbarous and dark periods, broke out into exceſſes that no laws could control; and which, by the inſidious inſtigation of the apoſtate ſpirit, cloathed themſelves in the garb and ſanctions of that religion which was levelled againſt their dominion.

For the effects of theſe paſſions, the advocate of chriſtianity has no apology to offer; he contends only, that they are not the fruits of that law which God communicated, however chargeable on thoſe who profeſſed an obedience to that law. Religious wars have

government of the feudal times. See Robertſon's View of the State of Europe prefixed to Hiſtory of Charles V. Vol. I. § 1. p. 23.

* It would be unjuſt to attribute the conduct of the Spaniards in America to religious zeal. The Jeſuits every where made religion a veil for political views.

been

been excited by political intereſts *; religious diſſenſions have been provoked by civil animoſities †, and religious perſecutions have been

* The perſecutions carried on by Charles the Fifth, and by Philip the Second, were heightened and regulated by ambitious views; and, under the reign of the latter prince, by a ſuperſtitious veneration for the Roman ſee. The inquiſition, wherever it has been eſtabliſhed, hath been the inſtrument as much of political as of religious tyranny.

† Religion had ſo little to do with the civil wars and factions carried on under the banners of religion in France, that we learn from their hiſtorians, that the Conde's and Coligni's embraced the reformed faith, becauſe the Guiſes were of the Romiſh church. The account of Davila is very remarkable: he ſays, that the admiral Andelot adviſed the patroniſing of the Calviniſts, in order to ſpur them on to the deſtruction of the Houſe of Lorrain, which, (beſides other advantages) would make it believed, for the future, by all the world, that the civil war was firſt kindled, and blown up, not on the princes account, and their pretenſions to the government, but by diſſenſions and controverſies in matters of religion. He adds, that it was a counſel and reſolution ſo fatal and pernicious, that, as it opened a door to all thoſe miſeries and calamities which, with terrible example, for a long time, afflicted and diſtracted that kingdom, ſo it brought to a miſerable end both the perſon himſelf that adviſed it, and all thoſe who, led by their affections and preſent intereſts, conſented to it. See Farneworth's Tranſlation of Davila, Book I. p. 33. Who would think

been raiſed by perſonal hatred *. Here, then, religion was the pretence, not the cauſe; and the impartial enquirer ſhould not credulouſly aſſent to every profeſſion, and to every affected motive, but candidly inveſtigate the latent ſprings and concealed deſigns of them.

The viſionary fancies which philoſophy firſt blended with religion †; the abſurd principles

think of accuſing religion, when he reprobates the hypocriſy and concealed ambition which operated in the factious proceedings of the laſt age in England?

* Mr. Voltaire, ſpeaking of the Duke of Buckingham, ſays, "Cet Anglais fit declarer la guerre a la France uniquement parce qu'on lui refuſa d'y venir parler de ſon amour, (for Ann of Auſtria). Les affaires du monde ſont tellement meleès tellement enchainees que les amours romaneſques du Duc de Buckingham produiſirent une guerre de religion, & la priſe de la Rochelle." Eſſai ſur l'Hiſt. Gen. Vol. IV. c. cxlv.

† The ſchiſms and hereſies which diſturbed the peace of the primitive church, and introduced endleſs controverſies and diſſenſions, originated chiefly from the prejudices of Jewiſh ſectaries, or from the errors of Gentile converts, who adopted chriſtianity without abjuring their former opinions, which they blended with the ſimple truths of the goſpel. The corruptions of the Jewiſh ſects, and the follies of Heathen philoſophy, were interwoven and entangled with the doctrines of revelation; and the Gaulanites, the Nazarenes, and the Gnoſtics, and

ples and extravagant errors gradually accumulated; and the ſcholaſtic ſubtleties, ſpeculations, and diſputes, which were incorporated with it, at the revival of literature, when fairly conſidered, reflect diſcredit only on thoſe who interwove ſuch vanities with inſpired wiſdom, and debaſe not the purity of truth.

The gradual departure from Chriſtian righteouſneſs, in the practice of its profeſſors, which kept place with the corruption of the faith, and which, at laſt, attained to that height of depravity that called loudly for reform, can be urged only to illuſtrate the ſad effects of ſuperſtition, and impeach not the perfection and natural tendency of a law, which in every line inculcates holineſs, in every precept exhorts to purity. They prove that alliance which ſubſiſts between opinion and practice; and demonſtrate, that in proportion as the word of God is neglected and concealed, corrupt manners, and licentious conduct, will prevail.

and all who were infected with the reaſonings of the Gentile wiſdom, diſputed for their peculiar tenets as if they had been the doctrines of Chriſt. See Lardner's Hiſt. of Heret. B. I. § 13.

In

In the fanatic zeal, and in the degrading ſuperſtitions that have, in modern times, diſgraced the profeſſors of our holy religion, we behold the unhappy influence of human corruption, which, impatient of reſtraint, and baſe in its ſuggeſtions, has miſapplied, and perverted the precepts of an all-perfect law. The law itſelf doth not authoriſe exceſs, nor give ſanction to folly; but men of weak and impatient minds have blended their extravagant notions with its precepts, and been hurried, by heated imaginations, to erroneous and diſreputable conduct. Every virtue hath its exceſs; and nothing uſeful can be preſcribed that is not capable of dangerous and extravagant application: but true piety is not leſs honorable becauſe inflamed paſſions have engendered phrenſied and extatic fancies: ſincere faith is not leſs ſalutary becauſe credulity hath inclined to fictitious inventions and a ſuperſtitious creed.

If a zeal for God's ſervice has been combined with an intolerant ſpirit; if a reverence for religion has been deemed compatible with inactive and ſecluded abſtraction from its duties; if a fervent regard to the welfare of Chriſt's church hath been counterfeited by

ambitious and diſſembling paſſions, the miſtakes, or the evil deſigns of unrighteous men, reflect no diſcredit on a temperate and obedient reverence for a revealed law. The hypocriſy which hath debaſed devotion; the barren faith which hath been divorced from obedience; the errors, corruptions, and mockeries, which have been blended with religious worſhip, ſhould be ſevered, in the eſtimation of conſiderate men, from the genuine and undefiled character of Chriſtian righteouſneſs. The ancient ſchiſms, the numerous ſects and hereſies, which ſtill prevail, which alienate the affections, and embitter the intercourſe of mankind, from whence come they, "come they not hence, even of your luſts?" The doctrines of Chriſt are ſimple, and proffered in ſimple language to our acceptance: if our judgment err in the conception of them, it is becauſe that judgment is, by the depravity of the heart, miſled. Diſſenſions and hereſies were what our inſpired teachers foreſaw and predicted *; and their exiſtence muſt be urged in eſtabliſhment, not in detraction of

* Matt. xviii. 7. 1 Cor. xi. 19. 2 Peter ii. 1. Acts xx. 29, 30. Luke ii. 34, 35. 1 Tim. iv. 1.

our

our religion. The ſacred monitors, however, by foretelling ſuch diviſions, furniſhed not the diſobedient with any plea or apology for their conduct. Conſcious that ſuch evils would happen, Chriſt, nevertheleſs, denounced wrath againſt their authors. "It is impoſ-"ſible," ſays our divine Maſter, "but that "offences muſt come; but woe unto that "man through whom they come." They who maintain that God may be delighted with different principles, and various modes of worſhip, do not therefore ſufficiently reflect on the nature and claims of his attributes, nor on the intention and ultimate tendency of revealed truth. As prejudice ſhall be diſperſed, and reaſon operate, the luſtre and excellency of divine truth will be diſplayed; and it is not, ſurely, a too ſanguine interpretation of prophetic promiſes, which points out the proſpect of a final eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity in its ſimple and uncorrupted purity.

The tendency of chriſtianity, then, is not unfriendly to mankind. If, ſometimes, like all other bleſſings that men have received from Providence, it hath been perverted and abuſed, yet its general operation has been,

and muſt ſtill farther prove, ſalutary and good; if, as Chriſt foretold, the ſword of the Chriſtian has been ſometimes wielded in defiance of the reſtrictions of chriſtianity, that ſword ſhall ultimately be converted into an inſtrument beneficial to mankind. The armour of God, furniſhed to his diſciples, is to enable them "to ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil;" to "wreſtle, not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places *." Variance and diſcord may be the caſual reſult of the introduction of that law which rebukes the follies, and would correct the ſins of mankind; but the ſtill voice of inſpired wiſdom muſt finally be heard; the admonitions of a peaceful monitor muſt ultimately prevail. That which is "ſet for the fall and riſing again of many, and for a ſign, which ſhall be ſpoken againſt," muſt, in the end, overpower the ſtrength of human oppoſition, and confound the reaſonings of human wiſdom. The church, which has been aſſailed by ſo many difficulties, and againſt

* Epheſ. vi. 11, 12.

which,

which, as founded on a rock, the gates of hell cannot prevail, will ultimately "be lifted up," and unfold "its everlaſting doors," in a triumphant ſtate, when Chriſt "the King of glory ſhall come in;" "and there ſhall in no wiſe enter into it any thing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or a lie, but they which are written in the book of life *."

Chriſt himſelf was deſpitefully inſulted and mocked. He ſuffered, and was crucified, for tranſgreſſions which he did not commit; and his religion alſo has been calumniated and condemned for imputed evil. Amidſt reviling, however, and apparent ignominy, our Saviour diſplayed a triumph on the croſs; and appeared, after his victory, with gracious and friendly aſpect, to receive and to reflect honor and glory on mankind; ſo likewiſe his religion ſuſtains its character, undegraded by falſe accuſation and malignant charges, and will hereafter exhibit to the world the unſullied majeſty of its divine perfection.

Wherever ſcience begins to dawn, there chriſtianity alſo ſheds its riſing beams; where-

* Pſalm xxiv. 7—10. Rev. xxi. 26, 27.

ever ſcience has long ſhone, there chriſtianity likewiſe diffuſes a ſteady light, which ſhall finally diſperſe every cloud and ſhadow that miſtaken apprehenſions have raiſed up to encircle it; ignorance and prejudice flee away from its preſence; deſpotiſm, and cruelty, and guilt, ſhrink from its awful ſight.

As the leſſons of chriſtianity are admitted by gradual propagation in the weſtern continent, they awaken the rude and untutored Indians from the night of darkneſs, raiſe them in the ſcale of created beings, excite their higheſt faculties, and call forth all thoſe ſocial affections which tend to civilize and improve mankind. The cheerleſs regions of Africa glow at length with the imparted rays of revelation; and the naked and harraſſed inhabitants of its deſarts hail them as the ſignal of freedom, and improvement to their unhappy tribes.

The more poliſhed and enlightened inhabitants of the eaſt, where revelations were firſt communicated to mankind, and where the principles of divine truth ſtill remain, interwoven with ſpurious pretenſions, and encumbered with fictitious additions, are prepared for the reception of the true faith, and

muſt

muſt finally yield to its convincing power *. The abſurd and complicated theology of the Gentoos, with its painful auſterities, and pernicious ſuperſtitions, muſt fade before the bright and reaſonable evidence of chriſtianity, when that evidence ſhall be earneſtly and judiciouſly preſented. The dominion and tyranny of the falſe prophet, eſtabliſhed by the ſword, ſhall finally bow its impious and ambitious creſcent to the croſs; and the fabrications of impoſture fall from the ſolid edifice founded by Moſes, the Prophets, and the Redeemer of mankind.

* White's Bampton Lectures, 10th ſermon. The religion of Mahomet acknowledges the authority of Moſes and of Chriſt as true prophets; and the doctrines of the Brahmans, which are eſtabliſhed from the Ganges, to the extremities of Japan and Turkey, with only ſuch variations as time and climate, and accidental circumſtances may have produced, admit the exiſtence of one God; the immortality of the ſoul; many moral virtues, and many religious traditions, conſiſtent with, and ratified by chriſtianity, which, when formerly introduced, made a rapid progreſs in the eaſt, and which, but for the miſconduct of its miſſionaries, might apparently have been firmly eſtabliſhed. In 1558, there were 1,800,000 Chriſtians in Japan. See Sketches relating to Hiſtory, Religion, &c. of the Hindoos, Vol. II. Sketch 13.

Chriſtianity, then, as it ſpreads, will overturn the ſuperſtitions and bigotry of other religions: it will diſperſe the ſullen ſhades and gloomy devotion of barbarous climes; and it will vindicate its genuine truth from the fictions and inventions of more refined theologies.

In civilized and enlightened countries, the fabrics of human error have been undermined, as the aſſumptions of human authority, in points of faith, have been diſclaimed. The authentic records of our religion, collated, and reſtored to their genuine character, and excluſive pre-eminence, muſt finally conciliate a general and ſincere aſſent. Then ſhall truth triumph with unreſiſted evidence, ſcepticiſm ſhall be abaſhed, and hereſy ſhall be trodden under feet. That ſharp and ſpiritual ſword, that goeth out of the mouth "of "the word of God," ſhall then diſcomfit the nations aſſembled againſt his ſaints. The beaſt and the falſe prophet ſhall be caſt alive into a lake of fire, and Satan himſelf, the great inſtigator to evil, be caſt into the bottomleſs pit. All nations ſhall then join in united worſhip: all people ſhall aſſemble with aſſociate praiſe. Then, as the Pſalmiſt, in pro-

prophetic deſcription, concludes his inſpired prayers, Chriſt ſhall " judge the people with " righteouſneſs, and the poor with judgment. " He ſhall beat in pieces the oppreſſor. In " his days ſhall the righteous flouriſh. He " ſhall have dominion from ſea to ſea, and " from the river to the ends of the earth. " They that dwell in the wilderneſs ſhall bow " before him; and his enemies ſhall lick the " duſt. All kings ſhall fall before him; all " nations ſhall ſerve him. For he ſhall de- " liver the needy when he crieth; the poor " alſo, and him that hath no helper. His " name ſhall endure for ever: his name ſhall " be continued as long as the ſun: and men " ſhall be bleſſed in him: all nations ſhall " call him bleſſed. Bleſſed be the Lord " God, the God of Iſrael, who only doeth " wondrous things. And bleſſed be his glo- " rious name for ever: and let the whole " earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and " Amen *."

* See Pſalm lxxii.

DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

LUKE I. 78, 79.

Whereby the day-ſpring from on high hath viſited us, to give light to them that ſit in darkneſs and in the ſhadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.

HAVING, in a former diſcourſe, conſidered the evils that appear to have attended the propagation and eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity, and ſhewn that they cannot, with any truth or juſtice, be aſcribed to that religion, but muſt be attributed to the perverſe and corrupt paſſions of men, it may be proper to point out in what reſpect chriſtianity has been indiſputably ſerviceable to the world.

In the conſideration of this ſubject, it will be eaſy, by an obvious diſtinction, firſt, to illuſtrate the beneficial effects of chriſtianity in

in a deſcription of the evils from which it has reſcued us; and, ſecondly, to point out, by a repreſentation of the good that it has conferred, in how great and important intereſts it has promoted the welfare and happineſs of mankind.

To have a complete and juſt idea of the evils from which chriſtianity has reſcued us, we ſhould take a view of the religion and manners which prevailed at its firſt introduction. On a general and unprejudiced ſurvey of Pagan times, we find only religions formed on imperfect traditional information, and gradually degraded into abject ſuperſtition and pernicious idolatries. The religions which were founded on human terrors, and built up by artifice, with a ſuperſtructure of falſhood, of omens, auguries, prodigies, and oracles; which were ſupported by the pretenſions of judicial aſtrology, and the arts of conjectural divination, or the ſuggeſtions of evil ſpirits, could excite only a perverted and corrupt ſervice. A mythology, woven and ſpread out by fiction, could be diſplayed but to generate, in its beholders, erroneous and prejudicial ſentiments; and the fanciful and attractive colourings in which it was worked,

worked, ſerved but to increaſe the miſchief of its deceptions: its familiar and corporeal imagery rendered it acceptable to vulgar apprehenſion, while the elegance and poetical ornament of its contexture, and the philoſophical explication of its allegories, ſoftened the groſſneſs of the machinery to more refined imaginations. Faſcinated to reverence every object of capricious admiration, the judgment of men became vitiated: paſſions were idolized, and popular vices were embodied and conſecrated for worſhip. In countries the moſt civilized and inſtructed, the objects of adoration were deteſtable; they were worſhipped with human ſacrifices*, and

* Euſeb. Le Laud. Conſtant. c. xiii. Præp. Lib. IV. c. xvi. Liv. Lib. XXII. c. lvii. Plutarch. in Marcel. Init. Macrob. Satur. Lib. I. c. vii. Alex. ab Alex. Lib. VI. c. xxvi. Human victims were immolated not only by barbarous nations, but by Greeks and Romans, the "Prima Virorum." Ariſtomenes a Miſſenian ſlaughtered three hundred, among whom was Theopompus, in one ſacrifice. Among the Romans, human ſacrifices were interdicted by a decree of the ſenate, during the conſulſhip of Cn. Cornelius Lentulus, and Pub. Licinius Craſſus; but a ferocious ſpirit of ſuperſtition claimed its victims till Adrian again forbad the continuance of the ſavage cuſtom.

honoured

honoured by ſanguinary and ſavage ſpectacles *.

The conſequence of ſuch religions could not but be an extreme corruption of manners; and it is certain, that the ſcripture repreſentations of the Heathen wickedneſs are not exaggerated †. They are confirmed, indeed, by Heathen accounts, not only by thoſe of poets and ſatyriſts, but by the fair confeſſions of hiſtorical teſtimony. The Pagan world, "given up unto vile affections," "committed all iniquity with greedineſs;" and the moſt flagitious crimes that have ever diſgraced our nature, were diſplayed, not by ſolitary and deteſted individuals, but under the ſanction of a religion, of which the rites and myſteries were profligate, and the feſtivals and public celebrations licentious ‡.

Neither

* Seneca, Epiſt. 95.

† Rom. i. Epheſ. iv. 17—19. and Grotius. The deſcriptions, by profane writers, are not leſs ſevere. Tacitus repreſents his time as fæva et infeſta virtutibus; and the hiſtorian elſewhere ſtates, Magnitudinem infamiæ a nonnullis concupiſci, atque ejus, apud prodigos noviſſimam eſſe voluptatem; but it is vain to ſelect individual paſſages in proof of what every page of hiſtory will demonſtrate in glaring colours.

‡ The temples expoſed and demoliſhed by Conſtantine, were the ſcenes of every ſpecies of public debauchery.

Neither was it the groſs and popular religion alone that miſled mankind to erroneous and corrupt conduct. Philoſophy, which appears ſometimes to have ſtolen its fire from heaven: to have borrowed from the ſcattered pages of divine wiſdom, yet, in its refined and ſtudied ſpeculations, juſtified, at different times, every folly and ſin that corruption engendered. To riot in licentious indulgence, to wrap up in ſelfiſh apathy, to reject external control, to gratify perſonal reſentment, and to reduce all morality to opinion, were, at different times, the maxims of different ſects. The expoſure of weak infants was publicly authoriſed, by theoriſts, ignorant of the true value of human life, and regardleſs of the utility of mental exertions for the benefit of others *. Slaves, who had ſurvived the

chery. See Euſeb. de Vit. Conſtant. Lib. III. c. 54—58. The hiſtorian ſpeaks of a temple of Venus, at the top of Mount Libanus, which was ſuch a ſchool of wickedneſs, that no reſpectable man dared to approach it. Above a thouſand proſtitutes were kept at a temple at Corinth. Alexand. ab Alex. L. VI. c. xxvi. Origen. Cont. Celſ. Lib. IV. Grotius de Verit. &c.

* Gerard Noodt Julius Paulus, ſive de Partus Expoſitione.

power of active ſervice, and the harſh cruelties of the treatment which they experienced, were callouſly left to periſh *. Unfeeling and inſulting triumphs were diſplayed with oſtentatious emulation. Falſhood †, ſuicide, and polygamy, and many horrible and unnatural vices, were allowed and vindicated.

In the ſubverſion of a ſyſtem ſo pernicious, chriſtianity effected immediate benefit. The few ſages, whoſe minds were enlightened by the dawn of true wiſdom, were ſenſible, that without a divine revelation, no general reform could be expected; and wherever chriſtianity was communicated, it effected its hoped-for benefit. It relieved mankind from wandering by the glimmerings of traditional knowledge; from a religion of ceremonies and ſervile ſuperſtition to a religion of virtue, purity, and ſubſtantial reformation. It ſubdued the haughtineſs of human pride, re-

* Quintil. Inſtit. Lib. III. c. viii. Grot. de Jur. Bel. B. III. IV. IX. Bp. Porteus's 13th Sermon, p. 312. The Roman maſters had the power of life and death over their ſlaves till the humanity of Adrian withdrew the dangerous authority. See Adrian in Hiſt. Auguſt. Script. c. xviii. p. 169.

† Whitby on Epheſ. iv. 25.

ſtrained

ſtrained the licentious ſenſuality of Heathen appetites, and expelled the groſſneſs of Heathen principles. It drew over the corruption of mankind a veil of decency. It ſoftened the rugged and brutal paſſions which prevailed, by introducing a courteſy and urbanity of manners. It brake the fetters of ſlavery, as it now deſires to remove its remaining chains *. It threw down the barriers of prejudice, and the narrow diſtinctions of national pride. It diſcountenanced hatred and revenge, and brought forth the ſpirit of univerſal charity, to move, as did the ſpirit of

* The number of ſlaves is ſtated, by ſome hiſtorians, to have been equal to that of the free inhabitants of the Roman world. The Chriſtian emperors enacted many laws to check the capricious tyranny of the maſters of the ſlaves. See Inſtitut. Lib. I. Tit. VIII. Digeſt. Lib. I. Tit. VI. 1, 2. Lib. XLVIII. Tit. VIII. XI. Novell. XXII. c. viii. &c. Robertſon obſerves, that the humane ſpirit of religion ſtruggled long in this reſpect with the maxims and manners of the world, and contributed more than any other circumſtance to introduce the practice of manumiſſion, and he proves this by a long deduction of particulars, and by a reference to many documents. See View of the State of Europe. Note 20.

God at the firſt creation, when the earth was without form, and void, on the face of the waves of a troubled world, overſhadowed by darkneſs, and agitated by ſtorms.

Chriſtianity, then, muſt be allowed to have removed away the pollution of much evil, and to have compoſed, from the confuſion and jarring elements of diſorder, a ſyſtem of arrangement and harmony that is "very good." He who is not biaſſed by any paſſions to contemplate that religion in an unfavourable point of view, will, on examining its firſt origin, find it to have been alſo the cauſe of genuine and efficient benefit to mankind; and farther tracing its operation in different periods, will ſee it acting with powerful and beneficial effect in every age.

Chriſtianity, in its firſt appearance, by unfolding the true character and inſcrutable attributes of God, and the real nature and condition of man, inſtructed mankind in a reaſonable and acceptable ſervice. By revealing the promiſes of life and immortality, and by ſtamping the aſſurance with poſitive ratification, in the reſurrection of its Founder, chriſtianity opened the proſpect of a future

judgment, and of a final diſpenſation. It pointed out the means of obtaining eternal happineſs, and ſhed a divine light on the œconomy and arrangements of the preſent world. It confirmed the hopes, and enlivened the expectations of mankind; and furniſhed them with joyful conſiderations, that might animate and ſupport them in every viciſſitude of life. It eſtabliſhed the only foundation on which reſignation and contentment can be built, removing the ſandy baſis of a philoſophy, defective in itſelf, and recommended on inadequate motives.

As the light of religion was diffuſed, its important influence was experienced. It at firſt ſhone brightly in the inſpired zeal and fortitude, in the exemplary and diſtinguiſhed ſanctity of its apoſtles, and early teachers, who contemplated the living example, and walked in the recent footſteps of their great leader. It diſplayed its effects in the internal concord, and in the unprecedented charities and aſſociate virtues of ſmall communities, to an extent, proverbial and exemplary, and which excited the admiration of its enemies; till at length, by gradual propagation, it ſpread its efficacy through the conſtitution

of every community, where its inſtructions were preached *.

In every country in which chriſtianity gradually reared its peaceful and conciliating form, we find it ſtrengthen the pillars of ſociety, confirming the relations, and invigorating the connexions of life; combining religious ſanctions with civil obligations; introducing order, temperance, gratitude, fidelity, forbearance, harmony; giving energy to obedience; enforcing, by conſcience, what external regulations could not reach; exciting virtues which political authority could not claim; uniting mankind in cloſer ties, and animating them to the exertion of every ſocial, and every friendly affection.

* Plin. Epiſt. Lib. X. Epiſt. 97. Lucian de Mort. Pereg. p. 764. Tertull. Apol. chap. xxxix. Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. Lib. VII. c. xxii. Jortin's Remarks, Tom. II. Even Julian commended the conduct of the Chriſtians as exciting admiration; Miſapog. p. 99. and Mr. Gibbon mentions the pure and auſtere morals of the Chriſtians among the cauſes which he ſuppoſes to have contributed to the growth of the Chriſtian church. He elſewhere alſo obſerves, that even the faults, or rather errors of the Chriſtians, were derived from an exceſs of virtue.

Enquire we of hiſtorians, however partial, however unfriendly to our religion, however reluctant to reveal the virtues of thoſe who profeſſed the faith of Jeſus, and we ſhall find that the diſciples of chriſtianity have been ever peaceable and patient ſubjects. Submiſſive, even under governments the moſt intolerant and oppreſſive, they ſilently cultivated a perſecuted faith, recommended it only by the practiſe and communication of its precepts, joined in no factious reſiſtance to eſtabliſhed authorities, conſpired in no turbulent or ſeditious ſchemes, exaggerated no grievances, nor joined in the clamours of popular diſcontent. From its firſt appearance, the Chriſtian ſpirit interferes with no lawful claims of human authority. It renders to Cæſar the things that are Cæſar's; tribute, to whom tribute is due. The Roman magiſtrate, in his perſecution, charges it with no factious contrivance. It conſents to ſuffer rather than excite dangerous commotions, or forfeit due and incumbent allegiance. It gains aſcendancy by its own excellence; and, when countenanced by imperial protection, confers ornament and advantage on the powers with which it is combined.

Chriſtianity, which firſt publiſhed its mild decrees in the ſtillneſs and calm of univerſal peace, endeavoured to eſtabliſh, on permanent principles, the concord and harmony of mankind. It diſcouraged the wild ardour of conqueſt, teaching that victory is ſubject to the control of the Lord of Hoſts, before whom "the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are "counted as the ſmall duſt of the balance;" as "leſs than nothing, and vanity." It diſcountenanced the pride of power, exhibiting, in the inſtructive records to which it appealed, nations overthrown, and kingdoms deſtroyed; and leading ambition to contemplate the broken image of dominion, conſumed, in prophetic deſcription, by that ſtone which ſhall ultimately fill the earth *. It held up then awful inſtruction againſt that luſt of power which had led the fourth kingdom to ravage, and tyranniſe over the earth, with its iron ſway, and which was then tottering, with its own bulk, to weakneſs and diviſion.

Amidſt the deſtruction which overwhelmed the Roman world, involving flouriſhing cities and dependent nations in its fate, when "hail and fire, mingled with blood, were

* Dan. ii. 31—35.

"caſt

" caſt upon the earth," the Chriſtian church alone preſented an hallowed and reſpected ſanctuary; firm in its foundations, it fell not with the ſurrounding powers; and though polluted by the introduction of human inventions, it ſtill preſerved characters of a divine original, which broke through the Gothic ſtructures of ſuperſtition, diſcouraged the intruſion of violence within its peaceful boundaries, and kept alive that religious ſpirit which alone could counteract the ferocious paſſions that then domineered in the earth.

The awful preſence of religion often oppoſed itſelf againſt the fury of invading conquerors. Its merciful voice was heard ſometimes to plead, with effectual ſupplication, againſt the rapacious and exterminating rage of thoſe barbarians who overran the empire. Amidſt devaſtation and rapine, the prelates of chriſtianity were active to ſpread their robes over the fallen, to reſcue their poſſeſſions from the flames of conqueſt, and to raiſe up aſylums for the wretched in ſcenes of deſolation and diſtreſs *.

In

* The interpoſition of Leo the Firſt preſerved the city of Rome from the deſtructive ſword of the Huns.

In the ages which ſucceeded the ſubverſion of the Roman power, and in the barbarous governments erected on its ruins, we find no rays but what chriſtianity diffuſed, no virtues but what chriſtianity diſcloſed. If ought of knowledge, or of ſcience flouriſhed, it was in religious ſecluſion. If equity or benevolence withheld the hand of oppreſſion, it was becauſe they were enforced by the perſuaſive voice of religion. If agriculture and uſeful arts were encouraged and commended, it was by the patronage and example of thoſe monaſtic inſtitutions, of which many of the advantages, in dark periods, have been for-

The ſame Pontiff obtained from the Vandal Genſeric, that in the ſecond ſack of Rome the perſons and houſes of the citizens ſhould be ſpared, which they were, as much as poſſible, amidſt the confuſion and havock of a pillage, which continued for fourteen days. He diſtinguiſhed himſelf alſo by endeavours to reſtore the miſchief ſuſtained by the ſufferers in the plunder, at the ſame time that the biſhop of Carthage charitably ſupported an immenſe number of Roman priſoners, carried into Africa, many of whom were afterwards redeemed, and returned to inhabit their ruined country. See other proofs of great and eminent virtues, which raiſed eccleſiaſtics above their contemporaries in Denina delle Rivoluzioni D'Italia, Lib. V. c. iv. and Cave's Primitive Chriſtianity, Part III. c, ii.

gotten,

gotten, in indiſcriminate cenſure of their exceſs *. What but chriſtianity was that ſpirit of paternal regard which ſoftened the fierceneſs of the feudal ſeverity! What were the courteſy and gentleneſs which mitigated the wild enthuſiaſm and ferocity of military ages, and introduced a generous forbearance to control the paſſions of men! What but the ſuggeſtions of Chriſtian charity!

Chriſtianity conſpired, at theſe periods, to check private quarrels, and to ſoften revenge and hoſtilities between individual chieftains; to aboliſh the abſurd trial by judicial combat †, and to diveſt even war itſelf of cruelty and of the half of its horrors.

The wiſdom and benevolence likewiſe of our religion, in proportion as they were transfuſed into the civil laws and regulations of ſociety, introduced a more conciliating policy, and a more faithful attachment ‡;

* Voltaire's Eſſai ſur L'Hiſtoire Generale, Vol. III. c. cxvii. and Robertſon's State of Europe, Vol. I. p. 53, 54, 55.

† Du Gloſſar. Cange Voce Duellum, Vol. II. p. 1675

‡ The canon law was formed on principles of general equity, and directed by conſiſtent and determinate rules, when civil juriſprudence was eſtabliſhed on the worſt and moſt exceptionable grounds.

for

for though chriſtianity preſcribe no form of civil conſtitution, nor would, by ſubverting the various ſyſtems that prevail, reduce all governments to the ſame modification, yet in proportion as its principles are adopted, they meliorate and improve every conſtitution. The laws of chriſtianity reſtrain alike oppreſſion and revolt; religious and civil liberty combine in eſſential union; they flouriſh under the ſame protection; they periſh by the ſame wounds; a veneration of God, and a charity for man, are the great foundations on which juſtice, ſubordination, and peace, muſt be founded. The principles of religion are ſteady and unchangeable. The legiſlator who reſpects them, will ſacrifice no laſting intereſts for temporary objects. The ſchemes of policy, which have been deviſed in oppoſition to them, however they may have amuſed the fancies of men, have been found tranſient and unſound. Reflection hath condemned, and experience hath bewailed them.

Very intereſting and important proofs of the divine character, and ſalutary operation of chriſtianity, may be derived from a conſideration of that wiſdom by which it is

adapted

adapted to univerſal eſtabliſhment, and contributes to promote the univerſal welfare. In comparing its influence with the effects of other religions, as ſhewn in the preſent ſtate of the world, under every diverſity of climate, government, and manners, we behold every where the bright evidence of heavenly truth contraſted with the dark and malignant features of falſhood and evil. The pure and upright ſpirit of a divine law bends not like the contrivance of impoſture in accommodation to acquired habits, or to local cuſtoms and temptations. It ſeeks to counteract the ſeduction of pernicious example, and would ſtem the torrent of prevailing corruption. It flatters not the paſſions, nor humours the prejudices of men, but inculcates a firm and ſteady fortitude, unyielding to circumſtance, unſubdued by the infection of ſurrounding manners.

The liberal and diffuſive benevolence of univerſal charity, breathes ſentiments far different from the churliſh and contracted principles inſpired by the ſuperſtitions of impoſture. The conſiderate and friendly maxims of chriſtianity blend themſelves with the policy of governments but to lower the pride

of

of pre-eminence, and to plead the claims of ſubjection. The faith of the lowly and crucified Jeſus, rejected by nations, where deſpotiſm and ignorance prevail, incorporates itſelf with the government of civilized and enlightened countries, conſpiring with the temperate exertions of freedom, caſting away the fetters which tyranny and ſuperſtition have impoſed, and which ſtill confine in darkneſs, the nations ſubjected to their control; promoting, with zealous induſtry, that diffuſion of knowledge which enables mankind to judge of its pretenſions; exciting the free exerciſe of the intellectual powers to the diſcovery of truth; raiſing the mind to ſublime ſtudies, and intereſting contemplations; ſtimulating it to the attainment of every moral and ſpiritual perfection, and awakening the faculties of an immortal Being to an attention to his eternal intereſts.

It is the effect of ſuperſtition to deaden the powers, and to depreſs the induſtry of men; but the religion of Chriſt ſtirs up its diſciples to an active and animated obedience; bids them mingle with ſociety for the exertion of friendly offices, and for the communication of aſſiduous charities.

Since

Since the period when chriſtianity was reſcued by the reformation from diſguiſe, and reſtored to its true character, its inſtructions have effected the moſt ſalutary and important changes, in the opinions and conduct of every people who have received its genuine oracles. The attributes and perfections of God have been proclaimed with fidelity. The condition and expectation, and duties of men, have been deſcribed without flattery, or reſpect to perſons. Hence a worſhip in ſincerity and in truth has been eſtabliſhed, undebaſed by barren ceremonies, unencumbered by ſuperfluous parade; and hence a pattern of the true church has been reſtored on apoſtolic principles. Hence the rights of humanity have been taught with a ſucceſs that daily operates to alleviate the ſorrows, and to multiply the enjoyments of life; to harmonize the tempers, to reconcile the animoſities, and to ſubſtantiate the concord of mankind.

The appropriation of a ſabbath day to religious retirement, from ſecular concerns, and to a performance of the ſolemn offices of devotion, has a tendency to allay the too great violence of human paſſions, to abate

the

the ardour of ſelfiſh competitions, and to raiſe the mind to rational piety. The inſtruction on that day conveyed to ignorance; the reproof held out to ſin; the wholeſome admonitions and ſalutary warnings, delivered to every rank of life, undoubtedly contribute to check the inroads of corruption. The reſtrictions of the day; its reſerve and order; its repoſe and exemption from labour; its decent ornament, and quiet character, produce even, in a political point of view, very beneficial and important diſcipline and effects to ſociety. Contemplate the appearance, and conſider the conſequences of the inſtitution, not ſo much in the diſſipated and tumultuous town as in the ſequeſtered village; obſerve the aſſociate worſhip, the decent chearfulneſs, the harmony and uſeful recreation of the day: the conſolation which it affords to the aged, and the inſtruction which it procures, by exhortation and diſcipline, to the young; and it muſt be allowed, that much intrinſic good thence accrues to the community.

The hallowed periods likewiſe, and the ſtated obſervances inſtituted by the church, in

in conformity with the ſpirit, and intention of our religion, conſpire certainly to the ſame effect. The days ſet apart to celebrate the memory of diſtinguiſhed ſaints, or of events productive of important benefits to mankind, the feſtivals of joy and gratitude, and the faſts for penitence and contrite affliction of the ſoul, cannot but operate in ſubſerviency to the great deſign of our exiſtence; they awaken ſerious reflections, animate piety to its moſt lively emotions, and exerciſe the virtues, of which they recal the conſecrated remembrance and effect.

If, in communities, and extended circles of ſociety, the influence of religion hath been ſhewn thus ſalutary, its principles will be found to have been equally advantageous in private application. In the great diſplay of hiſtory we are not often preſented with the picture of private life; but in the particular detail of many eminent characters, who have flouriſhed at different periods ſince the dawn of the Chriſtian æra, we find, in the fair deſcription of their conduct, an exemplification of the efficacy of the Chriſtian precepts. Whatever can be conceived of elevation and victory over the world, of true greatneſs in adver-

adverſity *, and of forbearance in ſucceſs; whatever of generoſity can be fancied in diſintereſted exertion, in ſelf denial, in liberal and extenſive benevolence, hath been frequently diſplayed in the diſciples of Chriſt. If faith in its holy and aſpiring veneration of an all-perfect and all-ſeeing God; if hope in its humble and aſſiduous endeavours to obtain an immortal recompence; if charity, in its various and enlarged deſigns; if theſe be lovely in themſelves, and beneficial in their tendency to mankind, they have ever accompanied and characteriſed the preſence of genuine chriſtianity.

The natural operation of religion, in private as in public life, is to awaken and regulate the affections, and to encourage, on diſintereſted principles, the cultivation of ſocial virtues. In the various ties and complicated relations which reſult from our connexion in civilized life, it holds out a rule of conduct, of which all ages, ſince its revelation, have conſpired to celebrate the excellence; of

* The conduct of thoſe great men, who contributed to the eſtabliſhment of the reformation in this country, may be mentioned as among ſome of the moſt ſignal proofs of theſe effects.

which

which all deſcriptions of men, however they may differ as to doctrinal and ſpeculative points of faith, agree to commend the morality; which addreſſes the inmoſt ſentiments, and regulates the ſecret thoughts; which appeals to our judgment, and to our heart: not by a languid detail of ſpeculative precepts, but by the moſt animated and impreſſive leſſons, illuſtrated by example, and enforced by every motive intereſting and affecting to mankind; a rule which fluctuates not with the caprices of popular opinion, which bows to no prevalent principles, nor accommodates itſelf in conformity to any ſyſtem, but which, on ſteady and ſecure grounds, defines the duties, and marks out the great and eſſential intereſts of man. Such a rule might be ſuppoſed, in theory, to promote ſome good, where it ſhould be eſtabliſhed; and this, by experience, it hath been found to do. Men are not ſo perverſely wicked as to recede from excellence in proportion as it is diſcovered; or to turn to evil becauſe inſtructed to foreſee its conſequences and puniſhment.

Still if it be enquired why greater effects have not been produced by chriſtianity, and

why a purity of manners, in ſome degree correſpondent with the perfection of that law, does not generally prevail, it muſt be anſwered, that it is owing to that corruption of our nature, of which chriſtianity has revealed the ſource, and pointed out the remedy. The amendment of our manners has not been in proportion to the excellency of the inſtruction which we have received, but ſtill much amendment has been produced; and if our manners be compared with thoſe of any unenlightened people that have formerly exiſted, or that now do exiſt, they will be found to be eminently ſuperior.

The conduct of individuals alſo will be allowed, on fair examination, to be in general more commendable in proportion as they have ſeriouſly and ſincerely accepted religion as an unerring teacher and guide. If thoſe who moſt loudly call themſelves Chriſt's diſciples, have ſometimes moſt glaringly violated his laws, it is not difficult to diſtinguiſh affected reverence from real attachment: but uſually a faith in the merits of our Saviour, ſhines forth in humble imitation of his excellences.

If

If thoſe who are profeſſionally dedicated to the ſacred office of preaching the religion of Chriſt, have been accuſed of exhibiting no adequate holineſs of life, the accuſation, though admitted, would not invalidate their claim to the reputation of higher, and more exemplary conduct, than any other deſcription of men has diſplayed. What, if the perfection of the law, and of its great Teacher, will admit of no compariſon with the conduct of their immediate ſervants! and, if the teachers of righteouſneſs, when jealouſly watched, are found wanting, becauſe they are judged by the ſtandard of undeviating rectitude, what concluſions can we thence draw but ſuch as are rather favorable to the law than injurious to the character of its miniſters?

They who, unſubdued by the accumulated evidence of chriſtianity, have rejected it as a rule of life, have ſufficiently betrayed the weakneſs of their judgment in deciding on the moſt momentous principles of conduct. They have ſcoffed at excellence becauſe they have not underſtood its value; or they have affected ſuperiority by cenſuring what all the inſtructed part of mankind have agreed to

approve; and what, perhaps, they themſelves, in practice, delighted to diſplay: thus refuting, by their conduct, the abſurdity of their own maxims *.

That men of enlarged underſtandings are capable of forming erroneous opinions upon ſubjects moſt intereſting and important to mankind, is certain. Genius is accuſtomed to conſider, in an exaggerated point of view, whatever it generates or acquires. A love of new and ſtrange opinions diſpoſes it to credulity. It adopts with eagerneſs, and retains with pertinacious adherence. Hence the numberleſs theories which are daily engendered by active imaginations. Hence the new ſyſtems which are daily erected on hollow and unſubſtantial grounds, and decorated with every embelliſhment that partiality and invention can furniſh. Chriſtianity, by diſcloſing the criterion by which we may

* Celſus objected to chriſtianity, that it taught patience under inſult; Bayle, upon ſimilar grounds, vindicated revenge; and Tyndal diſapproved of the forgiveneſs of injuries. Hume thought humility and ſelf-denial uſeleſs; and we have often ſeen, that they who reject the evidence of chriſtianity, are eaſily led to diſpute the moſt obvious principles of natural religion.

judge

judge of theſe, enables us to guard againſt the deluſive repreſentations which men of great and captivating talents hold out. It teaches us to anticipate the fall of thoſe fabrics which are erected but for temporary effect; and exhibits truth as alone retaining its permanent luſtre and eſtabliſhment.

If, in every great and momentous point which affects the happineſs of mankind, we are furniſhed with clear and decided opinions, let us remember that it is to chriſtianity we are indebted for the inſtruction. If falſe virtues have been diveſted of their impoſing ſplendor; if humble and decried qualities have been raiſed to deſerved eſtimation; if characters, which the miſtaken admiration of mankind conſecrated as glorious, have, by juſt eſtimation, been exhibited as objects of horror, and the reverence of men been directed to uſeful and honorable examples, it was chriſtianity that reformed the opinions of the world. If proſperity hath been taught to feel, and abaſement encouraged to hope; if ſucceſs has been tutored to moderation, and affliction been cheered to patience, it hath been from the ſuggeſtions of that Counſel which threatens the elevation of the

proud, and aſſociates itſelf in friendly conſolation with the diſtreſſed. Where, then, is wiſdom that religion hath not inſpired? Where is the virtue that religion hath not taught?

The ſtrengthened ties of kindred bear teſtimony to the efficacy of chriſtianity. Its precepts are tranſcribed in the extenſion of the ſocial charities; in the reciprocal deeds of filial and parental love; in the offices of kindneſs to neighbours and dependants; in the attention to the diſcipline of youth, and the virtues of riſing generations; in the condeſcenſion of the great, and in the ſubmiſſion of the lowly; in the exertions of manly and fraternal friendſhip; in the chaſtened affections, and mild aſſiduities of female tenderneſs. What law but that of chriſtianity can unite ſociety in one extended bond of charity? Where, but in Chriſtian countries, has been kept alive the flame of univerſal love? Where elſe has been raiſed the houſe for indigence, the hoſpital for diſeaſe, the ſchool for ignorance, the ſhelter for infirmity and age?

Wherever chriſtianity is obeyed, there it muſt awaken the beſt ſenſibilities of the human heart, call forth its virtues, and depreſs

preſs its evil propenſities. In proportion as its influence is weakened on the minds of men, however civilized, ſo much, as recent experience has too ſadly proved, do they glide into depravity *. As the reſtraint is withdrawn, the corruption of human nature appears; and we become diſpoſed to commit whatever ſins our uncontrolled paſſions ſuggeſt. If that corruption can be effectually counteracted; if reſentment and envy can be ſoftened; if pride, luſt, and intemperance, can be controlled and reined in; if the love of peace ſhould ſeek to allay the paſſions, and to calm the diſſenſions of mankind, it muſt be from the operation of that ſpirit which he, who was the "Prince of peace," communicated; which philoſophy may adopt, but did not generate.

* It is an obvious and juſt remark, that the revolution which has happened in a neighbouring country would not have been diſgraced with ſuch wild phrenzy, or ſtained with ſuch atrocious cruelties, if the principles of all religion had not been gradually deſtroyed among the people, by the miſchievous writings of their favourite philoſophers. If we can catch any gleam of returning order, it muſt be in the hope of the eſtabliſhment of pure religion, of which impartial diſcuſſion muſt demonſtrate the evidence and value.

The full efficacy of religion, however, ſtill remains to be ſeen, and will be gradually experienced as it ſhall be more extenſively and more perfectly eſtabliſhed. As "the "glory of the Lord ſhines round about," "peace on earth, and good-will towards "men," may be proclaimed. Wherever vigilance and ſimplicity abide, there the good tidings of great joy are gladly received *. Wherever reaſon and experience liſten, there the power of the divine word muſt produce its effect †. The diffidence of the ſhepherd accepts its communications with praiſe ‡. The wiſdom of the ſage bows in adoration of its Teacher §. As the precepts of chriſtianity are delivered in ſincerity, and in truth, they ſpread wide a diffuſion of uſeful knowledge. The benevolent ſentiments of univerſal philanthropy, which are now profeſſed by thoſe who would recommend new theories, are derived from an acquaintance with the moral maxims of chriſtianity. They are to be found in no earlier code than the inſpired volume, and are firſt regiſtered in ſacred

* Luke ii. 8—14. † Luke ii. 46, 47.
‡ Luke ii. 20. § Matt. ii. 1—11.

characters.

characters. When the peaceful days which ſpeculative philoſophy, in imitation of prophetic deſcription foretels, ſhall be eſtabliſhed in the world, it muſt be by the extenſion of that Chriſtian ſpirit which ſhall guide the paſſions, and reſtrain the luſts of mankind. If, as in new ſchemes is promiſed, "nation ſhall no longer lift up ſword againſt nation, neither learn war any more," if "ſwords ſhall be beaten into ploughſhares, and ſpears into pruning hooks," it muſt be not by the operation of a ſelf-ſufficient and overweening philoſophy which would ſuperſede the Teacher, from whom its knowledge has been derived, but by the gradual influence of that law which went forth from Zion, and from the word of the Lord, which proceeded from Jeruſalem *.

To the univerſal eſtabliſhment of that law in purity, and to its vital operation in ſincerity and truth, it is the intereſt and duty of every man to labour and co-operate. In the private example of its excellence, all may diſplay their zeal; in the public propagation of its principles, few are they who cannot

* Iſaiah ii. 3, 4.

contribute

contribute: by attention to domeſtic inſtruction; by encouragement of public ſeminaries; by diſtribution of religious works, and by contribution to religious inſtitutions. In proportion as chriſtianity prevails, ſo will righteouſneſs and peace be eſtabliſhed. As we labour to enlarge and confirm its authority, we contribute to the advancement of that kingdom for which we daily pray; and recommend ourſelves to the favour of that Lord who hereafter ſhall deal out righteous and inexorable judgments to the world.

DIS-

DISCOURSE IX.

ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF PROPHECY, AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE WORLD.

2 PETER I. 19.

We have alſo a more ſure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.

ST. PETER, under the conviction of the approach of that diſſolution which his Lord had foreſhewn unto him *, earneſtly endeavours to impreſs his diſciples with a remembrance of the great truths of chriſtianity, which they had been taught. The apoſtle, on whom, as on a rock, our religion hath, in part, erected its foundations, aſſures

* 2 Peter i. 14. John xxi. 18, 19.

his

his converts, that the apoſtles "had not "followed cunningly deviſed fables, when "they made known the power and coming "of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but were eye-"witneſſes of his glory; for he received "from God honour and glory, when there "came ſuch a voice to him from the excel-"lent glory, This is my beloved Son, in "whom I am well pleaſed."

The glorious atteſtation alluded to by St. Peter, was that given to Chriſt at his tranſfiguration, which, as an anticipated repreſentation of our Lord's majeſty, furniſhed a pledge of his future coming *.

But, continues St. Peter, to thoſe who might diſpute the teſtimony of the apoſtles, we have alſo a more ſure word of prophecy to convince us of the certainty of Chriſt's future advent: alluding to the Hebrew prophecies in general that foretel that event, and perhaps particularly to the revelation of St. John, which opens with an enraptured viſion of his "coming with clouds †, when

* See Biſhop Porteus's Eſſay on the Transfiguration of Chriſt.

† Revel. i. 7. Newton on the Prophecies, Vol. III. p. 368—370. Sir Iſaac Newton on the Apocalypſe, ch. i.

he

he ſhould be ſeen by every eye;" and cloſes with a declaration, that he who teſtified the things which his beloved diſciple had revealed, had ſaid, "Surely, I come quickly*."

St. Peter then, without raiſing the word of prophecy above every other teſtimony, as ſome have erroneouſly imagined, only urges to thoſe, who might reject his evidence, that there was alſo a ſurer word of what he had preached, the concurrent predictions of inſpired writers, which, "as a light ſhining "in a dark place," had pierced the clouds of futurity, and promiſed the ſecond advent of our Lord "to judge the world in righte-"ouſneſs."

St. Peter terms prophecy a more ſure word†. Its poſitive promiſes muſt have excited, indeed, more confidence than any typical pledge could produce. The character of the ancient prophets had been long eſtabliſhed. Their writings were acknowledged to have long exiſted; and they recorded ſucceſſive revelations ſucceſſively fulfilled.

* Revel. xxii. 20.

† Βεβαιοτερον λογον, a ſurer word, a more firm and unexceptionable ground.

The

The generation then extant, in a retroſpect of the ſcripture hiſtory, found numberleſs prophecies, of different nations, accurately fulfilled; and could diſcover no circumſtances that contradicted the truth of prophecy, though all its predictions were, by no means, yet accompliſhed. In the detail of the Jewiſh hiſtory, they might note the delineation of the promiſes and threats of God; "the Amorite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebuſite," were "driven out *." If they enquired for Moab, it was "ſmitten," and "cut off from being a nation;" for "the children of Sheth," they were "deſtroyed †." "The remembrance "of Amalek," "the firſt of nations," was "utterly put out from under heaven ‡;" and

* Exod. iii. 8. xxxiii. 2.

† Exod. xv. 15. Numb. xxi. 24. xxiv. 18. Jer. xlviii. 2, 46. comp. with Jud. iii. 29, 30. 1 Sam. xiv. 47. 2 Sam. viii. 14. 1 Chron. iv. 22. Sheth is ſuppoſed to have been the name of ſome diſtinguiſhed perſon, or place, among the Moabites. Newton, Vol. I. Differt. V.

‡ Exod. xvii. 14. Numb. xxiv. 20. comp. with Jud. vii. 1 Sam. xv. 1—7. 2 Sam. i. 1. 1 Chron. iv. 43.

"Edom

" Edom was become a poſſeſſion *." The tribes of Iſrael had flouriſhed, or failed, as had been foretold. Benjamin and Judah were reſtored at the completion of the ſeventy years †; and the other tribes were loſt as a diſtinct people. The ſovereignty was eſtabliſhed in Judah; and the various and complicated, the apparently inconſiſtent prophecies of the Meſſiah, were literally and ſtrikingly accompliſhed in the advent of Chriſt. The hearers of the word had only, therefore, to ſearch and judge; they had only to look and ſee the event of prophecy, in its moſt ſignal circumſtances, ſubjected to their own obſervation.

The Apoſtle's converts, therefore, had " a " ſure word of prophecy, to which they " were bound to take heed;" and we who live in theſe latter days are furniſhed with an almoſt equal evidence of its infallible truth and certainty. The date of the production of thoſe writings, with which the adverſaries of our faith have furniſhed us, is ſufficiently

* Numb. xxiv. 18. Jerem. xlix. 17. Amos i. 11, 12. Obad. x. 1 Kings xi. 16.

† Jerem. xxv. 11.

known

known to prove that they were produced long before the events which they predict. The prophecies delivered by the patriarchs and the deſcendants of Abraham could not have been received as ſacred oracles, if delivered ſubſequent to the events which they deſcribe. From Moſes to Malachi, revelations were mingled with hiſtory, and with the laws on which the Jewiſh œconomy was erected and preſerved; and no temptation could occur to ſubſtantiate preceding records by the intermixture of fictitious predictions. No contrivance could interweave ſpurious prophecies in ſacred regiſters, generally diſperſed, and publicly received and read.

That the prophecies relative to the Meſſiah were produced before the appearance of Chriſt; that they were tranſlated into Greek, and diſperſed abroad, near three centuries before the birth of Jeſus, is notorious and allowed. Who then that has conſidered the predictions and relations of the Old Teſtament, as recorded by ſucceſſive and unconnected prophets and hiſtorians, but is ſtruck with the ſurety of prophecy, as exemplified in the completion of bleſſings promiſed, and curſes denounced, to individuals, and in the foretold

foretold deſcription of national events? Who that has compared the fate of the different governments of the world, as foreſhewn in the Old Teſtament, with their revolutions and deſtruction, as deſcribed by Heathen hiſtorians; who, laſtly, that has collated the prophets with the evangeliſts; the types and ſigns, the figurative and the literal prophecies of the Hebrew ſcriptures, with the circumſtances and events recorded in the New Teſtament, but muſt acknowledge that "prophecy came not in old time by the will "of man, but holy men of God ſpake as "they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt."

Waving, however, a retroſpect that has been often made; waving enquiries that ſometimes need the reſearches of chronology, let us advert chiefly to thoſe additional proofs of the truth of prophecy which have occurred ſince the firſt preaching of chriſtianity, and turning to a ſcene that lies before our eyes, conſider its accompliſhment in the preſent ſtate and circumſtances of the world. Of theſe all can judge: we poſſeſs the predictions, and need but look to the event, and the prophecy and the accompliſhment have the ſame evidence; which he that hath ears muſt hear; he that hath eyes muſt ſee.

Be it the object of the preſent diſcourſe, in a ſlight conſideration of ſome countries and nations as they now exiſt, to point out the completion of many ſignal prophecies, deſcribing the world in its preſent ſtate, with reference to the changes which it has undergone, as well as to what it has loſt, as to what it ſtill retains. If the kingdoms againſt which revelation directed its threats, are levelled with the duſt; if the Aſſyrian, the Babylonian, the Perſian, the Grecian, and the Roman empires, have ſucceſſively vaniſhed, "like the chaff which the wind "ſcattereth away," it is not poſſible to contemplate the countries in which they flouriſhed, changed, as they are, from ſeats of dominion to ſeats of deſolation, and not to feel a conviction of the truth of thoſe ſcriptures which predicted their ſeveral fates as preparatory to the kingdom of the Meſſiah.

Nineveh "the exceeding great and rejoicing "city," has "diſappeared," and an utter end has been made of it *. Babylon, "the glory

* Nahum ii. 8. Zephan. ii. 13—15. Thevenot's Travels, Part II. Book I. c. xi. p. 50. Taverner in Harris, Vol. II. Book II. c. iv.

"of

" of the kingdoms, the beauty of the Chal-
" dees excellency," " is become * a dwell-
" ing place for the wild beaſts of the deſert,
" which cry in her deſolate houſes." The great image, " whoſe brightneſs was excel-
" lent, is vaniſhed." " The head of fine
" gold, and the breaſt and arms of ſilver," have been " carried away." " The two horns
" of Media and Perſia" " are broken." " The third kingdom of braſs," which " bore rule over all the earth," hath been " broken" by the fourth kingdom, which " ſubdued all things †." In other words, as again was prefigured under typical repreſentation, " the leopard which had four heads," to whom winged victories and dominion was given, " has been devoured, and ſtamped
" upon by the fourth beaſt;" and his kingdom " divided toward the four winds of
" heaven, and not to his poſterity;" " into
" four kingdoms, but not in his power ‡:"

and,

* Iſaiah xiii. 19—22. xiv. 22, 23. Jerem. l. 13, 23, 39, 40. li. 13, 26, 29, 37, 42, 43. Benjamin Tudela Itiner. p. 76. Calmet's Dict. in Babylon. Hanway's Travels, Vol. IV. Part III. chap. x. p. 78.

† Dan. ii. 39, 40.

‡ Dan. vii. 6, 7. viii. 5—8, 21, 22. xi. 3, 4. After Alexander's death, his four captains, Caſſander, Ptolemy,

and, laſtly, the fourth kingdom, though "ſtrong as iron," which "devoured the "whole earth," has, in turn, been diſmembered into ten kingdoms, pourtrayed by the ten horns, the emblems of ſovereignty*; and the God of heaven hath ſet up that kingdom which ſhall never be deſtroyed.

Let the ſphere be revolved on its axis, and ſucceſſively preſent to our view the various nations of the earth, and we ſhall every where diſcover circumſtances foreſhewn in viſion, and no where events inconſiſtent with the ſacred deſcriptions. Lo! the great object in the Chriſtian's ſurvey, that firſt intereſts his attention: the land of Judea "ſpoiled, and

Lyſimachus, and Seleucus, who were not his deſcendants, eſtabliſhed four kingdoms, in Greece, in Egypt, in Thrace, and in Syria; in the weſt, in the ſouth, in the north, and in the eaſt. See Prid. Ant. Chriſt. 301.

* Dan. ii. 33—35. vii. 7. Sir I. Newton repreſents the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was divided to have been thoſe of the Vandals and Alans in Spain and Africa; of the Suevians in Spain; of the Viſigoths; of the Alans in Gallia; of the Burgundians; of the Franks; of the Britons; of the Huns; of the Lombards, and of Ravenna. See Obſervat. on Dan. ch. vi. Whatever was their number afterwards, they were ſtill called the ten kings.

"made

" made deſolate" by " the nation that came " from far," as " ſwift as the eagle flieth." Jeruſalem hath been " compaſſed with ar- " mies," and " its people have fallen by the " edge of the ſword, and been led away cap- " tive into all nations." It is " trodden down " of the Gentiles." " The fenced cities are " impoveriſhed." The ſanctuaries of Iſrael laid waſte. " The holy places defiled by the " worſt of the Heathen." " The days are " come" when " the temple is utterly thrown " down, and not one ſtone left on another*."

Thence let the eye wander to Arabia, where the deſcendants of Iſhmael authenticate the account, and verify the predictions of ſcripture. Still is the Arab " a wild man," as the angel of the Lord foretold. Still is " his " hand againſt every man, and every man's " hand againſt him"†; and ſtill, though every other country in the world hath witneſſed a revolution of empire, and a change of manners, ſtill do the multiplied and unnumbered deſcendants of Iſhmael, in conformity to the

* Levit. xxvi. 33. Deut. xxviii. Jerem. iv. 20—31. v. 11. Amos vii. 9. Ezek. vii. 24. Matt. xxiii. 37, 38. xxiv. 2. Luke xix. 41—44. xxi. 5, 6, 24.

† Gen. xvi. 11, 12.

divine decree, maintain an independent ſtate in the preſence of, and in defiance of the reſt of mankind. The career of victory hath been often checked on their frontiers; and ſucceſſive conquerors, who have meditated their ſubjection, have been arreſted by the hand of Providence, or withheld by the graſp of death *.

So likewiſe conſult the traveller, and thou ſhalt learn that Tyre, "the proud city," "whoſe merchants were princes, and which "enriched the kings of the earth with the "multitude of her riches;" "which heaped "up ſilver as duſt, and fine gold as the mire "of the ſtreets," preſents, as the prophets foreſaw, a ſad ſcene of broken walls and ruined towers; and is inhabited but by a few wretches, who ſeem to be preſerved to fulfil, literally, the prophetic deſcription, by ſpreading their nets on the bare rocks that project and overhang the ſea †.

* Alexander, Pompey, Trajan, Ælius Gallus, and Severus. Vid. Diodor. Sic. Lib. II. p. 92. Edit. Stephan. Dionis Caſſ. Hiſt. Lib. LXVIII. p. 785. Lib. LXXV. p. 855. Lib. LV. p. 561. Edit. Leunclav.

† Zechar. ix. 3, 4. Ezek. xxvi. 3—5. 14. xxviii. 18. Shaw's Travels, p. 330. Maundrell's Travels, p. 48. Volney, Vol. II. ch. xxix. Thevenot, p. 2. Book I. ch. xi.

Is

Is not Egypt alſo become "the baſeſt of "kingdoms?" Hath it any more "ruled "over others?" Have its ſlaviſh people any more "exalted themſelves above the nations," in ſcience, in exploit, or in worth *? It has, on the contrary, invariably "diminiſhed," and degenerated under a ſucceſſion of foreign deſpots.

The poſterity of Canaan. The inhabitants of Syria and Paleſtine, and Carthage, after having, agreeably to the prophecy of Noah †, been conquered by the Greeks and Romans ‡, who

* Ezek. xxix. 14, 15.

† Gen. ix. 25. Hannibal, in alluſion, probably, to a traditional remembrance of this prophecy, exclaimed, "Agnoſco fortunam Carthaginis," I confeſs the fate of Carthage. Livy, L. XXVII. Mede, Book I. Diſc. V. p. 284.

‡ Gen. ix. 25—27. If we adopt Newton's judicious and well-ſupported conjecture, in emendation of the text, and read, "curſed be Ham the father of Canaan," the prophecy will include all the deſcendants of Ham; and then we muſt conſider that Egypt, the land of Ham, was ſubdued by the Perſians, the deſcendants of Shem; afterwards by the Grecians, the deſcendants of Japheth; and conſtantly ſince, by the progeny of one or of the other. All Africa alſo, which was chiefly peopled by the deſcendants

who derived their origin from Japheth; and ſince, in conformity to the divine decree, by the Saracens, the deſcendants of Shem, now groan in ſubjection to the Turks, who ſprang from the progeny of Japheth, thus remaining, in alternate ſubjection, "a ſervant of "ſervants" to their brethren.

The poſterity of Japheth, whom "God "hath enlarged," has ſpread itſelf in colonies, and numerous and victorious armies over Leſſer Aſia, Media, part of Armenia, Iberia, Albania, Antient Scythia or Tartary, over almoſt all Europe, and, perhaps, has peopled even the weſtern continent *.

No where can the curious enquirer turn his eyes, and not find ſtriking proofs of the accompliſhment of the ſcripture prophecies. Proceed we farther to unfold the evidence of their truth, by opening the proſpect of other ſcenes. Let us conſider the deſcendants of Abraham, "multiplied as the ſtars of hea-"ven, or as the ſand which is on the ſea "ſhore, yet "plucked off from their own

of Ham, has been ſucceſſively ſubject to the Romans, Saracens and Turks. Vid. Bochart. Phaleg. Lib. I. chap. i. Lib. III. chap. i. col. 149. Lib. IV. ch. vii. col. 203.

* Gen. ix. 27.

"land,"

" land," and ſcattered and diſperſed through all countries; removed unto all the corners of the earth, " to the weſt, to the eaſt, to " the north, and to the ſouth *," marked out and ſet apart in many places, to particular obſervation, and every where known by the ſtriking features of a peculiar character; yet, though diſperſed, not deſtroyed †; unjuſtly oppreſſed, and cruelly ſpoiled, have they been evermore in the hand of their enemies; " their life" often " hanging in " doubt," while they have " feared day and " night, and have had none aſſurance of " their life ‡," as if puniſhed to the extent of the curſe which they imprecated on themſelves and on their children §; always harraſſed, yet not utterly caſt away. A full end hath been made of nations whither they have been ſcattered, yet a full end hath not been made of them, " though they have been aſſailed " on all ſides ‖." Slaughtered have they been in uncomputed numbers, yet not exterminated; " like the buſh of Moſes, as a learned

* Gen. xxviii. 13—14. Levit. xxvi. 34, 45.
† Jerem. xlvi. 28.
‡ Deut. xxviii. 66.
§ Matt. xxvii. 25.
‖ Jerem. iii. 11.

writer

writer has obſerved, "always burning, yet "not conſumed."

They are become "a proverb, a taunt, a "curſe, an aſtoniſhment and a hiſſing, and "a bye-word among nations where they have "no eaſe; neither hath the ſole of their feet "any reſt *:" ever deſpiſed, ever wandering. Their plagues are, indeed, wonderful, and of long continuance: they are "mad for "the ſight of their eyes †;" and have bowed down, like Naaman, in ſubſerviency to deſpiſed idols.

The Jews ſtill then exiſt a living evidence of the truth of ſcripture, and remain in the expectation of the accompliſhment of farther prophecies; and however deſpiſed, however deſervedly condemned for their obſtinate re-

* Deut. xxviii. 65. Jerem. xxiv. 9. Newton on Prophecies, Vol. I. chap. vii. p. 191. Baſnage's Hiſt. of Jews, Book VI. chap. i. § 1. Kennet, Echard, &c.

† Deut. xxviii. 34. Oroſius deſcribes the Jews, in the time of Trajan, with a remarkable correſpondence of expreſſion, "as every where mad with rage." Incredibili deinde motu, ſub uno tempore, Judæi quaſi Rabie efferati, per diverſas (vel univerſas) terrarum partes exarſerunt. Hiſt. Lib. VII. chap. xii. See farther proofs of their phrenſied deſpair in R. Gadalias, and David Ganz, and Newton, Vol. I. p. 195.

jection

jection of our Saviour's claim to the character of the Meſſiah, they are entitled to our conſideration, ſince, to them, mankind is indebted for the conſervation of thoſe divine oracles which furniſh us with inſpired wiſdom, and bear reluctant and unſuſpected evidence to the truth of chriſtianity.

Chriſtian charity forbids us to deepen the ſtains of guilt, diſcernible in the character of a people ſelected for important purpoſes, and from among whom the prophets and the apoſtles, the mother of Chriſt, and the Redeemer of mankind, were raiſed up *: of a nation firſt called to the light of the Chriſtian faith, and in whom "the nations of the "earth have been bleſſed," whoſe bleſſers God will bleſs, and whoſe curſers he will curſe †: who ſtill are ſubjected to his eſpecial care, "and kept in all places whither "they go ‡;" and who will finally be reaſſembled, and converted, though they have "abode many days without a prince, and "without a ſacrifice, and without an altar,

* Rom. ix. 5. xi. † Gen. xii. 3.

‡ Gen. xxviii. 13.

" and without an ephod, and without a tera-
" phim," or without divine manifeſtation *.

But let us advert to the diſcloſure of a ſtill greater ſcene, and contemplate the ſetting up of that kingdom which was produced " without hands," or human power, which " ſhall ſtand for ever;" which was eſtabliſhed in contempt of human pride, by that " fooliſhneſs of preaching" which " de-
" ſtroyed the wiſdom of the wiſe, and " brought to nothing the underſtanding of " the prudent;" which, under circumſtances contrary to all experience, and with a ſucceſs unprecedented and miraculous, was propagated by the " power of that God," who choſe, as the apoſtle foreſaw, " the weak " things of the world, to confound the

* Hoſea iii. 4, 5. Dr. Clarke juſtly remarks upon this paſſage, that it is an unparalleled miracle, that through all the changes which have happened in the kingdoms of the earth, from Moſes till the preſent time, nothing ſhould have occurred to prevent the poſſibility of the accompliſhment of theſe prophecies; but, on the contrary, that the ſtate of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian churches, at this day, ſhould be ſuch, as renders them eaſily capable, not only of a figurative, but even of a literal completion, if the will of God be ſo. See Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion.

" things

" things that are mighty; and baſe things " of the world, and things which are de- " ſpiſed; and things which are not, to bring " to nought things that are," that no fleſh ſhould " glory in his preſence," or exult in the preſumption of having effected the progreſs of the faith, by " the enticing words " of man's wiſdom, but in demonſtration of " the ſpirit and of power *." On turning to the predictions which foretold the eſtabliſhment and encreaſe of Chriſt's kingdom, we find its ſucceſs and ſeveral eventful periods deſcribed, and its character and effects minutely delineated. Its dominion is confirmed, in defiance of all human oppoſition. " The " grain of muſtard" is become " a great " tree;" which, however obſtructed in its growth and expanſion, will finally ſpread its branches over every kingdom of the earth. The ſeed which our Saviour ſowed, was " ſcorched," or " withered," or brought forth in abundance, according to the ſoil in which it fell †. With the good ſeed, as Chriſt in his parable foreſhewed, the tares have

* 1 Cor. i. and ii. Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

† Luke viii. 5, 15.

been

been ſown alſo; and the diſciples, as in expreſs language he foretold, have been "delivered "to be afflicted and killed, and hated," and "perſecuted, and delivered up to ſynagogues "and priſons, being brought before kings "and rulers for his name's ſake," "betrayed" often, "by parents and brethren, "and kinsfolk;" and many of them put to death *. Many alſo, as prophetically deſcribed by Chriſt, have been "offended," or ſcandaliſed: many "have waxed cold:" many have "departed from the faith †."

The prophecies of the inſpired author of the book of Revelation are ſtrikingly fulfilled. If we ſelect thoſe addreſſed to the ſeven churches of Aſia, as they exiſted in the time of the apoſtle, are they not come to paſs ‡? They have been ruined by internal hereſies and external enemies. The power of the Saracens has been eſtabliſhed over them, and the moſques of Mahomet, erected on the ruins

* Matt. xxiv. 9. Luke xxi. 12. Matt. x. 34—36.

† Matt. xxiv. 12. 1 Tim. iv. 1. Jude 17—19. 2 Theſſ. iii.

‡ Mede ſuggeſted, that the prophecies relating to the ſeven churches might have ſome farther reference to ſeven analogous ages of the church.

of

of temples, conſecrated to God and to his Chriſt.

Epheſus, the once glorious city, the emporium of Aſia Proper, and ſtyled one of the eyes of Aſia *, where St. John himſelf eſtabliſhed chriſtianity, and where the temple of Diana was deſerted for the apoſtle's church, is now again ſunk into ſuperſtition, and reduced to a village of cottages, ſhaded under maſſes of ruinous walls, amidſt the deſolation of fallen theatres, palaces, and temples. "Her candleſtick is removed out of its "place," the light of the goſpel, thus figuratively deſcribed, is withdrawn, and ſcarce a Chriſtian can be found to mourn over the ſad change, or to meditate amidſt ſuch ſcenes on the exact completion of prophecy †.

Smyrna, after being afflicted under the Diocleſian perſecution ten years, as the predicted tribulation of ten days, in prophetic language, apparently foretold, now "flou-"riſhes," though the other cities are de-

* Smyrna was the other. Plin. Hiſt. Nat. Lib. V. chap. xxxi. p. 280. Edit. Hard.

† Rev. i. 1—6. Vitringa, p. 73, 74. Smith's Sept. Aſiæ. Eccleſ. Notit. Rycaut's preſent State of the Greek Church, chap. ii. Wheler and Spon's Voyage, B. III. Van Egmont and Heyman's Travels.

cayed;

cayed; and religion, which "giveth a crown "of life," is, in ſome degree, cultivated, and will, doubtleſs, hereafter triumph, when the clouds of impoſture ſhall diſappear, agreeably to the conſolatory aſſurance of the apoſtolic prophet. "Fear none of thoſe things "which thou ſhalt ſuffer. Be thou faithful "unto death, and I will give thee a crown "of life *."

Againſt Pergamos, "the ſeat of Satan," which held the doctrine of Balaam, and of the Nicolaitanes †, "Chriſt has fought." A few miſerable families remain to groan, in abject ſervitude, under the accompliſhment of the divine decrees, and retain only one church in which they can aſſemble, and deprecate farther puniſhment ‡.

Thyatira,

* Revel. ii. 3, 10. Smith, Rycaut, &c.

† The Nicolaitanes were a licentious ſect, who affected abſtinence, but who acted in defiance of the ſacred injunction, to abſtain from meat offered to idols, and from blood, and from things ſtrangled, and from fornication: See Acts xv. 29. following the ſin of Balaam, who enticed God's people to commit fornication with the Midianites. Numb. xxxi. 16. They, probably, adopted other errors, as St. John ſpeaks of their doctrine diſtinctly from that of Balaam.

‡ That of St. Theodorus. A prieſt is ſent from Smyrna to officiate there. The magnificent church of Santa

Thyatira, whoſe inhabitant Lydia and her houſhold were among the early converts to chriſtianity *, has "received according to "her works," and has now no veſtige of any antient building, or of its churches, which were polluted by ſpiritual fornication.

Sardis, once the rich capital of the Lydian kings, exhibits, amidſt its grand and extenſive ruins, only the poor and unſheltered habitations of ſhepherds and herdſmen, who feed their cattle in the neighbouring plains. The few deſponding Chriſtians who remain, have neither prieſt, nor church in which to ſupplicate the divine mercies †.

Philadelphia, "which had a little ſtrength," has "been kept from the hour of tempta-"tion;" and preſerves near two hundred families of Chriſtians, who are allowed to worſhip God in four churches, which the ſuperſtition of Mahomet hath not prophaned ‡.

Santa Sophia is turned into a moſque, and the cathedral of St. John is buried in ruins. Vid. Smith, Rycaut, &c. &c.

* Acts xvi. 14, 15. Revel. ii. 18—25. Smith, Rycaut, &c. Ibid.

† Smith, Rycaut, Heyman's Travels, chap. x. &c. Ibid.

‡ Revel. iii. 7—13. Smith, &c. Ibid.

Laodicea, once the mother of ſixteen biſhoprics, and diſtinguiſhed for its extent and buildings, and riches, is now utterly ruined and forſaken, for its lukewarm indifference. It is ſpit out, and the city is become an habitation for beaſts *.

Such changes and deſtruction, brought down upon ſeven cities, as minutely foretold, with gradation of circumſtance, and diſparity of event, fully evince the juſtice of God's judgments, and the fidelity of his promiſes, and inculcate affecting leſſons of repentance to mankind.

The preſent diſcourſe would exceed its intended boundaries were it to dilate in a conſideration of all thoſe minute particulars of different events revealed to St. John. In the ſeals, which the Lamb only could open, and in the little book ſubjoined, as a remainder of the prophecies, are unfolded the viciſſitudes and revolutions of the Roman empire, before and after its diviſion; the ſucceſſion of its emperors diſtinctly characteriſed †; its calamities, and the accumulated

* Revel. iii. 14—17.

† Revel. vi. 2. Lowman ſuppoſes Chriſt to be repreſented as ſeated on the white horſe. See Pſalm xlv. 3. and

mulated effects of God's judgments in the effects of famine, peſtilence, and the ſword.

At the ſounding of the ſeven trumpets are revealed the mingled deſtruction of the Roman provinces by the barbarous nations *; the caſting down of the weſtern empire, ſinking in a deluge of blood †, with the ſucceſſive ſtages of its fate, particularly deſcribed in the fall of the dull and vapoury meteor ‡, and in the final darkening of the Roman ſplendor §. With encreaſing calamities and woe, is ſhown the falling ſtar from heaven of the impoſtor

and Revel. xix. 11, 12. He dates the beginning of the ſucceeding events from the time of Trajan; and applies the remainder of the chapter to ſucceſſive events till the time of Conſtantine. Biſhop Newton begins the period with Veſpaſian, and terminates the explication of the chapter with the victories of Conſtantine over his Heathen enemies.

* Revel. viii. 7. Philoſtorg. Hiſt. Eccleſ. Lib. XI. chap. vii.

† Revel. viii. 8.

‡ Revel. viii. 10, 11. The great ſtar, burning as a lamp, was probably Genſeric.

§ Revel. viii. 12. The ſun of the weſtern empire was darkened when Odoacer, king of the Heruli, put an end even to its name. Soon after, the kingdom of the Oſtrogoths was founded in Italy, by Theodoric.

Mahomet, who "opened the bottomleſs "pit," out of which "aroſe ſmoke," and whoſe people have overſpread the earth like locuſts *, which darken the atmoſphere with their numbers †, and who were allowed to torment, with ſcorpion ſtings, the unſealed members of the empire for five prophetic months ‡.

The

* Rev. ix. 10. The locuſts were fit emblems of the Arabians, ſince the locuſts ſpoken of in ſcripture came from Arabia. Exod. x. 13, 14. vii. 12. Joel ii. They are ſaid, in the character of the troops which they repreſent, not to "hurt the graſs of the earth, neither any "green thing, neither any tree." See Ockley's Hiſt. of the Saracens, Vol. I. p. 25. "Their faces were as the "faces of men, and their hair as the hair of women," a deſcription which alludes to the feminine ſtyle of treſſed and braided hair adopted by the Arabians. See Plin. Nat. Hiſt. Lib. VI. chap. xxviii. Mede Clav. Apocal. Book III. Tub. V. and Waple. The Saracens have invaded only thoſe parts of Europe which locuſts infeſt.

† It deſerves to be noticed as a remarkable circumſtance, that about the fourth or fifth year of the Hegira, the half of the ſun is reported, by an Arabian hiſtorian, to have been eclipſed: ſo that the ſun and air were literally darkened. See Abulpharag. Dyn. VIII. p. 199. Ver. Pocock.

‡ The devaſtation occaſioned by locuſts, as alſo that effected by the Arabian incurſions, is during the ſummer months. The five months have been, by ſome, underſtood

The leaders of the Turks *, their four ſultanies, or the people aſſembled from the four quarters of their empire, characteriſed as four angels prepared to execute, at all times, the divine will, and looſed, with reſtricted power, for deſtruction, with their myriads, and myriads of horſemen, have overrun a third, or great part of the world, having breaſt plates of fire, of jacinth, and brimſtone †; the heads of whoſe horſes were terrible as the heads of lions, and out of whoſe mouths iſſued fire, and ſmoke, and brimſtone ‡.

ſtood to be prophetic months of thirty days, and to define the period of one hundred and fifty years, during which the Saracens vexed the empire. See Daubuz and Waple.

* Revel. ix. 13. Lowman, upon an idea that there would be too great an interval between the time of the preceding prophecy relative to Mahomet, and the period of the Turkiſh victories, applies this prophecy to the Saracens, who invaded Spain about A. D. 713, and afterwards France. But the ſpirit of prophecy is not chained down to the ſlow ſeries of hiſtorical events; it ſelects chiefly the moſt remarkable periods, and the victories of the Ottomans ſeem to correſpond more with the prophetic deſcription than thoſe of the Saracens.

† Red, blue, and yellow; the colours of the Ottoman uniform.

‡ This was, probably, an alluſion to the Ottoman artillery, ſo diſtinguiſhed for its ſize and effects.

Amidſt the deſcription of theſe events thus prophetically detailed by St. John, as connected with the eſtabliſhment and intereſts of chriſtianity, we are ſhewn a repreſentation of the ſpiritual church, revealed with glorious circumſtances *, and exhibited under every ſtate, from its firſt diſplay to its final triumph under the univerſal dominion of Chriſt. Its ſufferings and perſecutions under the Roman empire †, are particularly diſplayed. The deſtruction of its adverſaries ‡; its tranquillity and aggrandizement by the acceſſion of multitudes of Hebrew and Gentile proſelytes §; the recompence of its pure members ‖; the gracious acceptance of the ſupplications of its ſaints **; the idolatry and corruption of its external members, who apoſtate to Pagan rites, profane the ſanctuary for 1260 years ††,

* Rev. iv. and v.
† Rev. vi. 1—10.
‡ Rev. vi. 12—17.
§ Rev. vii. 1—12.
‖ Rev. viii. 3, 4.
** Rev. vii. 13—17.

†† Prophetic days. See Ezek. iv. 6. The period coincides with the time, times, and half a time, or the three years and half of prophetic days of the woman's abode in the wilderneſs, and with the forty-two months of prophetic days of the continuance of the beaſt, and of the treading down of the holy city.

during

during which time two, or a few competent * witneſſes of the truth, preſerve their fidelity, in pious affliction, for the corruptions which they behold; whoſe denunciations of wrath will be fully accompliſhed; whoſe prayers operate efficaciouſly to bring down God's judgments on the earth †; who, during their teſtimony ‡, are cruelly perſecuted by the antichriſtian beaſt, and martyred

* Rev. xi. The law required two witneſſes. Deut. xix. 15. Matt. xviii. 16. The deſcription relating to the death and reſurrection of the two witneſſes has been referred, by different writers, to John Huſs and Jerom of Prague; to the Proteſtants of the league of Smalcald; to the ſufferers on the eve of St. Bartholomew's day, and to other later martyrs. It appears to have an aſpect to the perſecuted witneſſes of the church in general, and eſpecially to refer to thoſe who ſhall give a concluding teſtimony in its favour; as ſome imagine, by a literal reſurrection. A modern commentator, who has diſplayed much learning and ingenuity in explaining the book of Revelation as alluding to certain ſervices of the Jewiſh church, conſiders the two witneſſes as repreſentative of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian churches. See p. 134—141, and Rev. xiv. 1—6.

† Revel. xi. 5, 6. See Numb. xvi. 2 Kings i. Jerem. v. 12, 14.

‡ Οταν τελεσωσι, xi. 7. while they perform their teſtimony. See Matt. x. 19.

in that city of Rome where Chriſt was ſpiritually crucified *, and ſuffer every indignity, till the concluſion of the period of 1260 years: when God ſhall vindicate their teſtimony, and raiſe them up in his ſpirit, to the confuſion of thoſe, who, with unfeeling exultation, triumphed over their unburied bodies; when the church, which, for ſo long a time, had been nouriſhed and miraculouſly protected in a ſtate of baniſhment, though the dragon had perſecuted her, and the remnant of her ſeed †; and which had preſented her conſecrated number of redeemed and un-

* Rev. viii. 8—10. xvii. 18.

† Rev. xii. Mede reckons the period of the baniſhment of the church, and of the domination of the beaſt, from the wound of the Imperial ſovereignty of Rome; and ſtates it to commence either from A. D. 365, when the northern nations attacked Rome, or from 455, when they effected its deſtruction. Reckoning, however, from either of thoſe periods, the term is compleated, and the baniſhment and beaſt ſtill continue. Newton and others compute from the time of the eſtabliſhment of the temporal power of the Pope, about A. D. 756, when he became properly a horn or ſovereign power; and if we adopt this æra, the concluſion of the 1260 years will coincide nearly with the termination of the ſixth millennium, when, agreeably to ancient tradition, great changes have been expected.

defiled

defiled members to the Lamb, as her firſt fruits, ſhall at laſt triumph over the fallen Babylon, and witneſs the bleſſings of thoſe who have died in the Lord *.

Contemporary with the period of the church, in a ſtate of perſecution and baniſhment, is deſcribed the operation of that antichriſtian power which raiſed itſelf in oppoſition to the eſtabliſhment and continuance of chriſtianity in the world. The prophecies of Daniel, and thoſe of St. John, which more fully unfold the character of this hoſtile power, have been very early and very generally applied to the papal ſee; and been ſuppoſed, as well as thoſe preſumed to relate to the reputed type of antichriſt, Antiochus Epiphanes, to have been very remarkably fulfilled †.

The firſt features which the riſing power diſplayed, ſeemed to exhibit a correſpondence with the inſpired deſcription; and it muſt be confeſſed, that the ſubſequent delineation of character is ſo conformable to the prophetic

* Rev. xiv.

† Dan. viii. 23, 25. Newton, Vol. II. Diſſ. XV. chap. xvii. Hieron. col. 1127.

repre-

repreſentation, that we ſhould not be juſtified in diſregarding the interpretation, countenanced as it is, by the ſanction of the moſt learned and judicious commentators, ancient and modern.

This "myſtery of iniquity" is ſaid to have begun in the time of St. Paul: it was to be confirmed when another, that is, the Roman power, which reigned over the kings of the earth, ſhould be removed: "only," ſays the apoſtle, "he who now letteth muſt let, till "he be taken out of the way *."

He

* 2 Theſſ. ii. 7, 8. The early fathers, who had not witneſſed the diſplay of the antichriſtian characters in the ſucceſſors of St. Peter, expected the prophecies relative to Antichriſt to be fulfilled at ſome diſtant time, and generally in an individual perſon. Thoſe prophecies were, indeed, in ſome meaſure, "ſhut up and ſealed" till "the "time of the end;" and Mede is of opinion, that Antichriſt was to be a myſtery till the twelfth century. If we admit this, all previous application of the prophecies to the Pope muſt be conſidered as paſſionate and conjectural. In the tenth century, at the ſynod of Rheims, Arnulphus, biſhop of Orleans, repreſented that the Pope was Antichriſt. Uſſer. de Chriſt. Eccleſ. Succeſs. & Stat. c. ii. p. 36. Lond. 1613. Illyr. Teſt. Vet. p. 1558. Abbot Joachim, in 1191, is ſaid to have aſſerted, that the Pope was Antichriſt. See Rapin, Vol. I. p. 247. Wickliff applied the deſcription to the Pope; and the reformers vindicated

He is deſcribed, by Daniel, under the figure of "the little horn," as "coming up among "the ten horns," of the fourth beaſt, the repreſentative of the Roman empire, and as having "three of the firſt horns plucked up by "the roots before him*," as "diverſe" from the firſt horns; as having "a mouth ſpeak-"ing very great things," and "a look more "ſtout than his fellows;" as "making war "with the ſaints, and prevailing againſt "them;" as "ſpeaking great words againſt "the moſt High†, and wearing out the

vindicated themſelves from the charge of ſchiſm, by maintaining, that Rome was the "Babylon" from which God's people were commanded to "come out." Revel. xviii. 4. Grotius, Thorndyke, Hammond, and others, have diſputed the application; but, as Biſhop Hurd obſerves, "that "the Pope is Antichriſt is now to be conſidered as the "univerſal voice of the Proteſtant world."

* Dan. vii. 8. Mede ſuppoſes the three horns to repreſent the Greeks, the Lombards, and the Franks; but theſe powers could not well be ſaid to "be plucked up" by the Pope. Sir Iſaac Newton conſiders the emblems as deſcriptive of the exarchate of Ravenna; the kingdom of the Lombards; and the ſenate and dukedom of Rome, which, after revolting from Ravenna, might be enumerated, by Daniel, as among the original number. See Mede, Vol. II. Book III. chap. xiv.

† Symmachus tranſlates it "as the moſt High."

"ſaints

" ſaints of the moſt High," and " thinking " to change times and laws *;" as farther " doing, according to his will, and exalting " himſelf, and magnifying himſelf, above " every God, and ſpeaking marvellous things " againſt the God of gods;" as " not re- " garding the God of his fathers, nor the " deſire of women †," but as " honouring, " in his eſtate, the God of forces, and a God " whom his fathers knew not, with gold and " ſilver, and with precious ſtones, and plea- " ſant things ‡," and as " acknowledging " and encreaſing with glory" the Mahuzzim,

* Dan. vii. 7, 8, 19—25.

† Dan. xi. 36, 37.

‡ Dan. xi. 38. The verſe is otherwiſe tranſlated by Mede; " for to (or together with) God, in his ſeat, he ſhall honour Mahuzzim," &c. The original word Mahuzzim, (derived from mahoz, ſtrength, or a fortreſs) which many verſions retain, means protectors, and deſcribes here the conſecrated ſaints of the Romiſh church. The fathers and others, ſays Mede, even at the beginning of ſaint worſhip, by I know not what fatal inſtinct, uſed to call ſaints and their reliques, towers, walls, bulwarks, fortreſſes; that is, Mahuzzim, in the prime and native ſignification of the word. See Mede, Vol. II. Book III. chap. xvi. xvii.

(or

(or the deified ſaints) together with God, in conſecrated and ſtrong holds, and as "cauſing "them to rule over many, and divide the "land for gain *."

He is farther repreſented, by St. Paul, as "the man of ſin, the ſon of perdition, who "oppoſeth and exalteth himſelf above all that "is called God, or that is worſhipped †; ſo "that he, as God, ſitteth in the temple of "God, ſhewing himſelf that he is God ‡, as

* Dan. xi. 39. and he ſhall make the holds of the Mahuzzims withal (or jointly) to the foreign god. Mede, Book III. chap. xvii.

† Above all that is reverenced as great; above all that is called God. See 1 Cor. viii. 5. Aſſuming a pre-eminence above that which is aſcribed to the "gods "of the earth," and derogatory from the honour of the true God, "the God of gods," as in Dan. xi. 36.

‡ This is applicable to the papal aſſumptions without exaggeration. "The power of the Pope," ſays Antoninus, "is greater than that of all created power, and "extends itſelf over all things celeſtial, terreſtrial, and "infernal." The authority of the church, and therein of the Pope, has been ſet up above the word of God, and been held competent to diſpenſe with God's laws and precepts. The Popes have arrogated to themſelves worſhip, and the divine attributes of omnipotence and infallibility. In a gloſſary of the canon law, publiſhed under the ſanction of Gregory XIII. the Pope is called the Lord our God. Vid. Pol. Synop. in loc. and Brightman on Revel. xiii. 3, 6.

coming

" coming after the working of Satan, with " all power, and ſigns, and lying wonders, " and with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſ- " neſs*." He is the chief among thoſe who, " in the latter times depart from the faith, " giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits, and doc- " trines of devils †, ſpeaking lies in hypo- " criſy;" " forbidding to marry, and com- " manding to abſtain from meats ‡, which " God hath created, to be received with " thankſgiving of them which believe, and " know the truth."

Laſtly, he is pourtrayed by St. John with full delineation of character, and with diſtinction of circumſtance, from the imperial ſtate of Rome to the full eſtabliſhment of papal ſupremacy, as the agent of Statan, having " ſeven heads §, and ten horns, and as ſtand- " ing before the church," ready to devour, as ſoon as it ſhould be born, the man child,

* 2 Theſſ. ii. 3—10.

† 1 Tim. iv. 1. and Mede, Vol. II. Book III. p. 1. chap. i.—viii.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 2, 3. and Mede, Vol. II. Book III. p. 2. chap. i.—viii.

§ Revel. xvii. 9, 18. and Propertius Septem Urbs alta Jugis toto quæ præſidet orbi.

who

who ſhould "rule over all nations with a "rod of iron, and as afterwards "perſe-"cuting the woman for twelve hundred and "ſixty years" after her flight into the wil-neſs *." As "a beaſt riſing out of the ſea," and

* Revel. xii. 1—5. The man child ſeems, in the firſt inſtance, to be Chriſt, brought forth of the Jewiſh church. See Iſaiah lxvi. 7. Micah v. 3. Revel. xii. 5. comp. with Pſalm xxix. and Revel. ii. 27. The dragon ſought to devour the offspring of the women in the perſecutions carried on by the Heathen emperors; but he was foiled, and caſt out by Michael, the angel of the Jewiſh church, when idolatry was depoſed from the Imperial throne, and chriſtianity elevated in the perſon of Conſtantine. The flight of the church may be the diſperſion of the Jews, which was completed about A. D. 620, when they were interdicted from Judea. The dragon's agent had not ſeven heads and ten horns till the diſſolution of the Roman empire; but St. John deſcribes the ſucceſſive proceedings of Satan by different inſtruments, under one repreſentation, of a dragon characteriſed with ſome diſtinctions, not diſplayed till the latter times, of its exiſtence. Antichriſt was not an individual perſon: ſome features of the myſtery were ſhewn in Pagan Rome, which the devil employed as his inſtrument. When the Roman power, which hindered the full diſplay of "that wicked" was, "taken out of the "way;" he whoſe "coming was after the working of "Satan" was revealed, in complete character; and the other beaſt, with the two horns like a lamb: to be eſta-

 bliſhed

and troubles of the world, " with ſeven " heads and ten horns, and upon his horns " ten crowns," as receiving from the " dra- " gon his ſeat, and his power *," as wounded in one of his heads, as it were, wounded to death †; as having " his deadly wound " healed;" " as worſhipped;" as unparalleled and irreſiſtible; as having " a " mouth, ſpeaking great things and blaſphe-

bliſhed in the plenitude of the temporal and ſpiritual power, gradually roſe out of the earth. See Revel. xiii. 11—18. 2 Theſſ. ii. 7—10. 1 John ii. 18, 22. Antichriſt is a ſpirit of oppoſition to Chriſt, eminently perſonified in the papal power. 1 John iv. 3. 2 John vii. See Daubuz.

* The beaſt riſing out of the ſea with ten crowned horns, could not be Pagan Rome already riſen, but muſt repreſent the Roman ſtate after the deſtruction of the Imperial power, under the temporal government of the Popes. The ſecond beaſt pourtrays the Romiſh church in particular, the ſubordinate hierarchy, or body of the clergy, regular and ſecular. He is called alſo " the falſe pro- " phet."

† Five of the beaſts heads were fallen in the time of St. John. Revel. xvii. 10. The ſixth head, that of the emperor's, " was, as it were, wounded to death," when the Roman empire was overwhelmed, or when Rome was reduced to a dukedom, tributary to Ravenna. The wounded head was healed when Rome revolted from Ravenna, and again became formidable.

" mies;" as " continuing forty and two " months;" as " opening his mouth in " blaſphemy againſt God;" as " making " war with the ſaints, and overcoming " them;" as " ſucceeded and reinforced by " a ſecond beaſt, gradually riſing from the " earth," or a low eſtate, with " two horns, " like a lamb," denoting an hierarchy, with aſſumption of ſecular and eccleſiaſtical power, under a meek appearance. This ſecond beaſt united with the firſt beaſt, " doeth great " wonders, making fire to come down from " heaven on the earth, in the ſight of men*, " and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth " by thoſe miracles, which he had power to " do in the ſight of the beaſt." He reſtoreth and animateth the power of the idol image; forbidding any man " to buy or " ſell, ſave he that hath the name of the " beaſt†, or the number of his name, " which is the number of a man, and his " number is ſix hundred, threeſcore, and

* This has been even literally pretended. See Brightman, and Poli Synopſ. in loc.

† This appears to allude to the interdiction from traffic, which has been often the conſequence of the papal excommunication.

" ſix." * Antichriſt is farther ſhewn " as the " great whore that ſitteth upon many waters †,

* It muſt be remarked, that the number 666, is contained in the appellative word Lateinos, as written by the Greeks; a circumſtance not much to be inſiſted on, as not peculiar to the word, had it not been noticed by Irenæus, before the application of the prophecies, relating to Antichriſt, to the Roman power, and did not the Hebrew titles, for the Roman empire, contain the number alſo, as רומית, Romana Scil. Sedes, and רמענוש Romanus.

Romana, Scil. Sedes.	Romanus vel Latinus.	Lateinos.
ר——200	ר——200	λ—— 30
ו—— 6	מ—— 40	α—— 1
מ—— 40	ע—— 70	τ——300
י—— 10	ו—— 50	ε—— 5
י—— 10	ו—— 6	ι—— 10
ת——400	ש——300	ν—— 50
666	666	ο—— 70
		ς——200
		666

It is remarkable alſo, that the year 756, when the temporal power of the Popes was eſtabliſhed, coincides with the year 666, if we reckon from the firſt year of Domitian's perſecution, which began in the year 90, during which perſecution St. John ſaw his viſions in the Iſle of Patmos.

† Which waters are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. See Rev. xvii. 19. Babylon, the type of Rome, is deſcribed as " dwelling on many " waters," being ſituated on the Euphrates. Jerem. li. 13.

" with whom the kings of the earth have " committed fornication," and with the wine " of whoſe fornication the inhabitants of the " earth have been made drunken;" as " a " woman ſitting upon a ſcarlet coloured beaſt, " full of names of blaſphemy*, having ſeven " heads and ten horns;" as effeminately " arrayed in purple and ſcarlet colour, and " decked with gold and precious ſtones, and " pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, " full of abominations and filthineſs of her " fornication; and, upon her forehead, a " name written, Myſtery †, Babylon the " Great, the Mother of Harlots ‡, and Abo- " minations of the Earth;" as " drunken " with the blood of the ſaints, and with the " blood of the martyrs of Jeſus;" as " ſitting " on ſeven mountains;" as " deriving power

* The woman, ſeated on the beaſt, is the image of the church ſeated on the temporal power of the Pope.

† Rev. xvii. 5. The very word myſterium is ſaid to have been formerly written, in golden letters, on the papal mitre, as Monſieur de Montmorency aſſured Scaliger, on good authority. Vid. Scal. in loc. ap. Crit. Sac. & Poli Synopſ. Wolf. Cur. Philol. & Crit. Tom V.

‡ The Romiſh church is ſtyled " mother and miſtreſs " of churches." See Concil. Trident.

" and ſtrength" from the unanimous conſent of the ten contemporary kings, and as afterwards " hated," and made " deſolate and " naked," by thoſe kings, who had before ſubmitted their kingdom to the beaſt, on which was ſeated the woman who was " the " great city, which reigneth over the kings " of the earth *."

Such particulars, thus diſplayed, compoſe, it muſt be confeſſed, a ſtriking portraiture of the papal power; and, without tracing prophecy to its further accompliſhment, in the

* Rev. i. 17. Thoſe who would repreſent the character of Antichriſt to belong to Mahomet, are obliged to paſs over many features of the antichriſtian power. The Romaniſts themſelves, admit that the prophecies reſpecting Antichriſt apply to Rome, but contend that it is to Pagan Rome: but Daniel deſcribes the little horn as riſing after the ten horns or kingdoms, into which the fourth empire was to be divided: ſee Dan. vii. and the beaſt, with ſeven heads and ten horns, was to continue 1260 years, Rev. xiii. 1—5. which the Heathen empire did not. The primitive church was accuſtomed to pray, in its Liturgy, for the preſervation of the Roman empire, that the coming of Antichriſt might be delayed, as not expected to appear till after the deſtruction of that empire. Vid. Tertul. Apol. C. xxxii. & xxxix. ad. Scapul. C. ii. 2 Theſſ. ii. 7. and when the Roman empire was deſtroyed, they began to look for the appearance of Antichriſt.

predicted

predicted deſtruction of this ſpiritual Babylon *, we may wait the explication in the event, which will certainly be as exact as that of every former prediction, of which the obſcurities vaniſh in the completion.

The accompliſhment of the many predictions thus ſucceſſively fulfilled, a part of which only we have conſidered, ſhould lead us to look up, with aſtoniſhment and reverence, to that grand ſcheme of prophecy, which, opening with the firſt dawn of mercy, imparted to encourage the repentance of Adam, gradually unfolds the comprehenſive

* The ſeven vials, or the ſeven plagues, which fall under the ſeventh trumpet, and which are the ſubject of the third woe, appear to belong to the period of the deſtruction of Antichriſt, of which they, perhaps, mark out the gradations, " till the wrath of God ſhall be accom " pliſhed." The explication of them is not here attempted, becauſe, probably, they are as yet future, as Bp. Newton and others have ſuppoſed them to be. Brightman and Mede point out circumſtances, ſince the beginning of the reformation, in which they ſuppoſe them to have begun to receive their completion. Lowman ranſacks hiſtory for earlier applications of ſome of them. Robert Fleming, whoſe calculations ſurpriſe us by ſome conjectures partially verified, ſuppoſes the firſt vial to begin with the reformation, and the fourth to expire in in 1794. See Diſcourſes by Robert Fleming, publiſhed in 1701.

plan of the redemption of mankind. A vaſt and ſyſtematic diſpenſation, of which the parts are progreſſively diſplayed, and which progreſſively develope new dependencies; which derives ſplendor from every detail, and exhibits connection in every burſt of circumſtance; which pervades all time, and derives illuſtration from each revolving æra, cannot be contemplated without exciting a firm confidence in the divine word, and a full conviction of the final accompliſhment of the declared deſigns of God. Obſcure as prophecy may be in its general character, we find that its revelations have been ſufficiently intelligible to excite the hopes, and to conſole the afflictions of the faithful in every generation; to awaken the attention of mankind to a conſideration of God's providence in the protection of his church, and to lead them to foreſee its ultimate proſperity, after various changes and ſtriking viciſſitudes of event. We collect, from its general declarations, and eſpecially from the revelation of St. John, to whom every ſtate of Chriſt's kingdom, from its beginning to its conſummation, was diſcloſed, that we may hope for the univerſal eſtabliſhment of that diſpenſation,

tion, with triumphant diſplay of circumſtance, " when the kingdoms of this world " ſhall become the kingdoms of our Lord " and of his Chriſt, and he ſhall reign for " ever and ever."

All things, hitherto, have conſpired and worked together in ſubſerviency to the divine decrees; and the events and circumſtances of the preſent day may be ſtated as tending farther to the completion of the declared deſigns of God. The aſſumptions and errors of a corrupted church have been ſufficiently expoſed; and the dominion of the preſumed Antichriſt ſeems falling rapidly to deſtruction. Very great, and often ſucceſsful, and extending exertions, are daily made for the propagation of the goſpel, and for the promotion of Chriſtian knowledge. The ſpirit of reſearch, encouraged on religious ſubjects, though often perverted and abuſed by miſtaken or evil diſpoſed men, muſt ultimately tend to the confirmation of truth, of which the proofs multiply on enquiry, and the evidence brightens by diſcuſſion. Who ſhall ſay that amidſt the turbulent and deſtructive changes, which have been lately witneſſed in the political world, a ground may not ultimately be

prepared, by God's providence, for the further eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity in reformed purity and truth? "The people may imagine vain "things, and the rulers take counſel toge- "ther againſt the Lord, and againſt his "anointed," "yet the decree of God ſhall "be declared." The meteors of falſe philoſophy glare but to fall; and whenever reaſon and enquiry ſhall return, then ſhall the characters of truth be diſcovered, though buried in the fall of ſuperſtition, or overwhelmed in the ruins of indiſcriminate deſtruction. Diffidence, however it may ſhrink from the contemplation of ſcenes where conjecture can have no clue from experience, may yet ſuggeſt, in harmleſs ſpeculation, that confuſion muſt fearfully illuſtrate the neceſſity of order, and the deſtructive effects of falſe principles fatally evince the excellency of revealed truth. The ſame God who created an harmonious world from a formleſs chaos, and who ſaved Noah and his children in the ark, from that deſtruction which overwhelmed the earth, "corrupt "and filled with violence," will ſtill preſerve his church. The floods of wickedneſs may prevail and increaſe, but they ſhall bear up

the ark. The unrighteous may periſh, but God's covenant ſhall be eſtabliſhed with his ſervants. When the dove of peace, with its leaf of olive, ſhall return and ſettle on the earth, the altars of the Lord ſhall again be built * where they have been demoliſhed; and the bow of God's everlaſting covenant of mercy ſhall be ſeen in the diſperſing clouds.

In ſuch hope we are encouraged, by God's never-failing promiſes, to confide; and further purſuing prophecy, beyond the boundaries of the preſent life, we look with confidence to the future reſurrection of the body, and to its re-union with the ſoul; and to the ſecond advent of Chriſt, to judge the world: when a throne of unſullied purity ſhall be diſplayed; and whoever is not found written in the book of life, ſhall be caſt into the lake of fire. Mindful, therefore, of the words which were ſpoken before, by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of the apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour, let us not, with "the ſcoffers in the laſt days," enquire, with diſtruſt, "where is the promiſe of

* Gen. viii. 11, 12, 20.

"his

" his coming;" " for the day of the Lord will " come as a thief in the night:" but " ſeeing " that we look for ſuch things, be we dili- " gent, that we may be found of him in " peace, without ſpot, and blameleſs †.

* Rev. xx. 15. † 2 Peter iii.

DIS-

DISCOURSE X.

ON THE MILLENNIUM, OR REIGN OF SAINTS.

REVEL. XX. 4, 5, 6.

And I ſaw thrones, and they ſat upon them, and judgement was given unto them: and I ſaw the ſouls of them that were beheaded for the witneſs of Jeſus, and for the word of God, and which had not worſhipped the beaſt, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Chriſt a thouſand years. But the reſt of the dead lived not again until the thouſand years were finiſhed: this is the firſt reſurrection. Bleſſed and holy is he that hath part in the firſt reſurrection: on ſuch the ſecond death hath no power, but they ſhall be prieſts of God and of Chriſt, and ſhall reign with him a thouſand years.

ST. JOHN, after revealing prophecies relative to the ſtate of the church, in various periods: to its perſecutions, its ſucceſſive

ceſſive afflictions, its triumphant recoveries, and eſtabliſhed proſperity, repreſents it after the fall of Antichriſt, and the converſion of the Jews and Gentiles as "a bride ready for "the marriage" of the Lamb: as purified from pollutions, and "arrayed in the clean "and white linen" of righteouſneſs *. Purſuing his enraptured deſcription, he contemplates, in prophetic viſion, "the heavens "open," and him, who is called the word of God, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords, at the head of the heavenly armies, triumphant againſt oppoſing powers, and victor over the old ſerpent, which is the devil; and then, as is expreſſed in the text, he diſcloſes unto us appointed judges, ſitting on thrones †; and the martyrs of Jeſus, who had

* Revel. xix. 7, 8. xxi. 2, 9, 10. comp. with Iſaiah lxi. 10. See the prophetic allegory in the Canticles.

† Revel. xx. 4. com. with Dan. vii. 9. The thrones, deſcribed in theſe places, relate to the ſpiritual kingdom of Chriſt on earth, and are conſidered as different from thoſe judicial thrones, promiſed as the peculiar recompenſe of a future life to the diſintereſted fidelity of the apoſtles, who had left all, and followed Chriſt, and continued with him in his temptation. See Matt. xix. 28. Luke xxii. 28—30. Mede repreſents the thrones, ſpoken of

had been unpolluted by ſpiritual fornication, living and reigning with Chriſt a thouſand years.

The paſſage, and the following predictions connected with it, as more fully detailed in the text, have been erroneouſly interpreted to countenance ſome very extravagant and pernicious opinions relative to the future ſtate of the church, by thoſe who have not ſufficiently allowed for the figurative ſtyle of ſcripture, nor accurately compared the viſions of St. John with thoſe of preceding prophets; by thoſe who have not cautiouſly ſeparated the doctrines of ſcripture from the traditions of antiquity, and who, in con-

of by Daniel and St. John, to be deſigned for the twenty-four elders, who perſonate the biſhops and defenders of the church, and who correſpond with the Levites and prieſts in the camp of Iſrael, as he imagines the whole ſcene of this auguſt ſeſſion to be drawn up in conformity to the model of the caſtrametation in the deſert. Comp. Revel. xx. 4. with Numb. i. 52—54. and ch. ii. Mede Com. in Apocal. Part I. in Prophet. I. Whitby conceives, that the promiſe made to the apoſtles may reſpect their government over the twelve tribes, at the cloſe of the world, not by a reſurrection of their perſons, but by a reviveſcence of that ſpirit which reſided in them.

templation

templation of the glorious promiſes of revelation, have too far indulged their fancies in carnal and ſpeculative opinions. By a temperate ſurvey of the prophecies, delivered under the old diſpenſation, which relate to the final eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity, we ſhall be enabled to vindicate the genuine ſenſe of St. John's promiſes from the difficulties of a too literal conſtruction; and, by an impartial examination of the ſentiments of ſome antient and modern writers, be directed to form a ſafe and reaſonable judgment on the character and nature of that kingdom which we are inſtructed to expect.

Such diſcuſſion of preceding prophecies, and of the early and modern interpretations of them, is indeed neceſſary, if we would underſtand the viſions of St. John, who, in the ſcene which he draws in the paſſages above referred to, is allowed to repreſent the ſame glorious circumſtances which the Hebrew prophets had diſplayed, in the deſcription of a ſpiritual reign of Chriſt. "The teſtimony of Jeſus" is, we know, "the ſpirit of prophecy;" and the final eſtabliſhment of his kingdom is the great object on which every ray of revealed light concenters.

concenters. The future return of the Jews, the converſion of the Gentiles, and the perfect and univerſal effulgence of the goſpel, are the glad themes which every hallowed tongue proclaims, and which every enraptured ſtrain celebrates with accordant harmony.

The firſt prophecies in ſcripture, even the aſſurance that conſoled Adam, in his expulſion from Paradiſe, opened the proſpect of that ultimate triumph of the "woman's "ſeed," till which the "ſerpent's head" will not be fully bruiſed. Promiſes of the multiplication of the deſcendants of Abraham to poſſeſs the earth in greater proſperity than they have yet experienced, were conveyed to the patriarch himſelf, and to his immediate deſcendants *; and intimations of the general converſion of the Jews to the pure light of the goſpel, are to be found in the declarations of Moſes; for thoſe prophecies, in which he foretold the future return of his people from captivity, are juſtly repreſented as too magnificent to relate to their return from Babylon; and Moſes particularly aſſured them,

* Gen. xiii. 14—17. comp. with Acts vii. 5.

that

that the Lord would " gather them from all " nations whither he had ſcattered them, and " bring them into the land which their fathers " poſſeſſed, multiplying them above their " fathers," and effecting a ſpiritual " circum- " ciſion," and ſincere amendment of heart *.

David †, and the prophets who ſucceeded him, and who were inſpired to hold out conſolation under great calamities, and more fully to declare the particulars and circumſtances of the Meſſiah's kingdom, did unqueſtionably blend promiſes of remote and ſpiritual diſpenſation with thoſe of early and temporal accompliſhment; and foreſhew a perfect and univerſal reign of Chriſt to ſucceed the final illumination of the Jews and Gentiles, when " the Heathen ſhall be " given to the Son for his inheritance, and " the uttermoſt parts of the earth for his " poſſeſſion ‡."

" It ſhall come to paſs," ſays Iſaiah, " in " the laſt days §, that the mountain of the Lord's

* Deut. xxx. 1—6. iv. 29—31.

† Pſal. lxxii. lxviii. xxii. lxix. xxxv. xxxvi. cii. xiii. xxii. &c. and Allix.

‡ Pſalm ii. viii.

§ That is, in the time of the Meſſiah, the circumſtances of whoſe kingdom, in its ſucceſſive ſtates, are often

" Lord's houſe ſhall be eſtabliſhed on the " top of the mountains, and ſhall be exalted " above the hills *; and all nations ſhall " flow unto it;" " and he ſhall judge among " the nations, and ſhall rebuke many people;" when " the earth ſhall be full of the know- " ledge of the Lord, as the waters cover " the ſea." And " in that day there ſhall " be a root of Jeſſe, which ſhall ſtand for " an enſign of the people; to it ſhall the

often repreſented under one point of view. The laſt times in general, which begin in the time of the fourth kingdom of Daniel, are the times of the kingdom of Chriſt, from his paſſion to the end of the world. 1 Pet. i. 20. The latter times are the times of the apoſtaſy of the antichriſtian power. Mede, Vol. II. Book III. ch. xi.—xiv. Burton ſuggeſts, that when the prophets ſpeak of the latter days, they refer to the times immediately preceding the coming of Chriſt; and when of the latter years, or laſt days, according to the Jewiſh account, they mean the latter part of the ſuppoſed kingdom of Chriſt upon earth. Burton on Daniel, p. 37. But the latter days, ſometimes, certainly do ſignify the latter ages of chriſtianity, or of the world. Hoſea iii. 5. Deut. iv. 30.

* Iſaiah ii. 2—4. Micah iv. 1. The Jewiſh temple was on Mount Moriah. 2 Chron. iii. 1. See the ſame metaphorical deſcription of Chriſt's kingdom in Dan. ii. 35.

" Gentiles ſeek, and his reſt ſhall be glori-
" ous. And " it ſhall come to paſs, in that
" day, that the Lord ſhall ſet his hand again,
" the ſecond time, to recover the remnant
" of his people which ſhall be left;" " and
" he ſhall ſet up an enſign for the nations,
" and ſhall aſſemble the outcaſts of Iſrael,
" and gather together the diſperſed of Judah
" from the four corners of the earth *." And
" kings ſhall be nurſing fathers, and their
" queens nurſing mothers" to the church †;
" the glory of the Lord ſhall riſe upon it,
" and Gentiles ſhall come to its light, and
" kings to the brightneſs of its riſing ‡."
" The people ſhall be all righteous, and in-
" herit the land for ever;" and " new
" heavens and new earth ſhall be created, in
" the glory of which the former ſhall not
" be remembered §."

* Iſaiah xi. 9—16. See alſo ch. x. 20—22. xliii. 5. Micah ii. 12. Rev. v. 9, 10.

† Iſaiah xlix. 23. lx. 16.

‡ Iſaiah lx. 1, 3, 20. xxxiii. 20, 21.

§ Iſaiah lxv. 17. Burnet ſtyles the 65th chapter of Iſaiah the bulwark of the doctrine of the millennium, which never can be broken.

Purſuing

Purſuing the ſame ſtrain, Jeremiah foretells to the children of Iſrael, that when they ſhall acknowledge their iniquity, God will "bring them to Zion, and give them paſtors "according to his heart, which ſhall feed "them with knowledge and underſtanding;" that at that time they ſhall "call Jeruſalem "the throne of the Lord; and all the na-"tions ſhall be gathered unto it, to the name "of the Lord to Jeruſalem; neither ſhall they "walk any more after the imagination of "their evil heart*;" that they ſhall be "gathered out of all countries whither God "has driven them in his anger;" and they ſhall be "his people, and he will be their "God†."

At this period, as Ezekiel promiſed to his deſponding countrymen in exile, when the unſtrung harps were hung, by the dejected captives, on the trees, by the rivers of Babylon‡; at that period, as well as by earlier deliverances, God will take "them from among "the Heathen, and gather them out of all "countries, and bring them into their own

* Jerem. iii. 15—17.

† Jerem. xxxii. 37—44.

‡ Pſalm cxxxvii.

" land, and ſprinkle clean water upon them, " and they ſhall be clean *;" and " he " will" then " give them a new heart and " a new ſpirit, and put his ſpirit within them, " and cauſe them to walk in his ſtatutes, " and to keep his judgments, and do them; " and cauſe them to dwell in the cities; and " the waſte places ſhall be builded †." Then, as in allegoric viſion the prophet foreſaw, " the whole houſe of Iſrael" ſhall riſe, as it were, by a reſurrection, from its dead, and withered ſtate; its " dry bones" ſhall be again cloathed " with ſinews and fleſh," and be animated by " a breath," or ſpirit, " breathed from the four winds" of heaven; and " live, and ſtand up an exceeding great " army." The Lord ſhall " open the " graves" in which they have been buried, and cauſe them to come out, and bring them to the land of Iſrael and Judah; and Joſeph and the tribes of Iſrael their fellows, ſhall be re-united as one nation upon the mountains of Iſrael, under one king, and one

* Ezek. xxxvi. 24. Tit. iii. 5.

† Ezek. xxxvi. 10, 24—38. xxxix. 25—29. xx. 42—44.

ſhepherd; " and walk in God's judgments, " and obſerve his ſtatutes, and do them, and " his ſanctuary ſhall be in the midſt of " them *." " And after many days," as the prophet, in animated deſcription foretels, " in the latter years, when Iſrael ſhall be at " reſt," and dwell ſafely " in unwalled vil- " lages," a congregated hoſt of mighty armies, " with bucklers and ſhields, and ſwords, " Gog, the prince of Meſhech and Tubal †, " Perſia, Ethiopia, and Lybia, Gomer, and " and all his bands ‡: the houſe of To- " garmah §, of the north quarters, and

* Ezek. xxxvii.

† Gog is repreſented, by Mede, to be the father of the Scythians that dwelt in the eaſt and north-eaſt of the Euxine Sea. The northern nations of Europe and Aſia were generally ſtyled Gog and Magog. Meſhech was Cappadocia; Tubal was Iberia, the country to the ſouth-eaſt of the Euxine Sea. Gog and Magog are the ſame name, for Mem is an Heemantick letter, and is applied to diſtinguiſh the land of Gog. Mede, Book I. Diſc. V.

‡ Gomer, according to Mede's account, poſſeſſed the parts of Aſia, which lie upon the Ægean Sea, and Helleſpont northward; Phrygia, Pontus, Bithynia, and part of Galatia.

§ Togarmah, the ſon of Gomer, had Phrygia Major, and part of Galatia. Theſe are myſterious names for ſome future enemies of the church, poſſibly the Turks, who are of Scythian deſcent.

" all his bands, and many people with him,"
" ſhall aſcend, and come like a ſtorm, and
" like a cloud, to cover the land;" " to turn
" his hand upon the deſolate places that are
" now inhabited, and upon the people that
" are gathered out of the nations." " The
" Lord will ſmite his bow out of his left
" hand, and will cauſe his arrows to fall out
" of his right hand, and ſhall give him up
" to the ravenous birds of every ſort, and to
" the beaſts of the field, to be devoured;"
" and unto Gog ſhall be given a place of the
" graves of Iſrael, and they ſhall bury Gog
" and all his multitude;" " and ſeven months
" ſhall the houſe of Iſrael be in burying of
" them;" and God will " ſet his glory
" among the Heathen, and all the Heathen
" will ſee his judgment that he hath exe-
" cuted;" " and the Heathen ſhall know
" that the houſe of Iſrael went into captivity
" for their iniquity, becauſe they treſpaſſed
" againſt him *."

* Ezek. xxxviii. xxxix. Joel ii. iii. 1, 2. Zephan. iii. 8. Micah v. 5, 6, 9, 15. Dan. xii. 1. Zechar. xii. 9.

Daniel

Daniel alſo in captivity, in the proſpect of brighter ſcenes, foreſaw that " the ſaints of " the moſt high ſhould" finally " take the " kingdom;" and that " the greatneſs of " the kingdom under the whole heaven " ſhould be given to the people of the ſaints " of the moſt High, whoſe kingdom is an " everlaſting kingdom *."

" For behold," ſays Joel, " in thoſe " days, and in that time, when I ſhall bring " again the captivity of Judah and Jeruſalem, " I will alſo gather all nations, and will bring " them down into the valley of Jehoſaphat †, " and will plead with them there for my " people, and for my heritage Iſrael, whom " they have ſcattered among the nations;" " and the Lord will be the hope of his peo- " ple, and the ſtrength of the children of " Iſrael, and Judah ſhall dwell for ever, " and Jeruſalem from generation to genera- " tion ‡."

" In that day," ſays Amos, " I will raiſe " up the tabernacle of David that is fallen,

* Dan. vii. 18, 27. Rev. v. 10. xx. 1. Dan. ii. 4.

† The valley of the Lord's judgment, from Jehovah and Shaphat to judge.

‡ Joel iii. 1, 2, 14, 16, 20.

" and cloſe up the breaches thereof; and I " will raiſe up his ruins, and I will build it " as in the days of old;" " and the waſte " cities ſhall be inhabited;" " and the people " of Iſrael ſhall be no more pulled up out of " their land *."

" For then," ſays Zephaniah, " will I " turn to the people a pure language, that " they may all call upon the name of the " Lord to ſerve him with one conſent †." " The remnant ſhall not do iniquity, nor " ſpeak lies; neither ſhall a deceitful tongue " be found in their mouth." When " the " daughter of Zion may rejoice," for the Lord " ſhall be in the midſt of her;" and " he will gather them that are ſorrowful for " the ſolemn aſſembly;" and " get them " praiſe and fame in every land where they " have been put to ſhame; a name and a " praiſe among all people of the earth ‡."

" For behold," ſays the Lord of hoſts, by the mouth of Zechariah, " I will ſave my " people from the eaſt country and from the " weſt country;" " and I will bring them,

* Amos ix. 11—15. † Zephan. iii. 9.
‡ Chap. iii. 13—20.

" and

" and they ſhall dwell in the midſt of Jeru-
" ſalem, and they ſhall be my people, and I
" will be their God, in truth and in righte-
" ouſneſs *."

From a collective conſideration of theſe and ſimilar prophecies, delivered under the old diſpenſation, it is evident that they point to ſome future eſtabliſhment of Chriſt's kingdom, in greater extent and perfection than it has yet diſplayed; that the full effect of them was not produced in the former reſtoration of the Hebrew nation, or the converſion of the Gentiles, at the firſt inſtitution of chriſtianity, or at any ſubſequent period, is certain; and, from the earlieſt explication given of them, it is manifeſt that they were underſtood to allude to ſome remote and unfulfilled circumſtances.

The Jews, from very early ages, believed that, at the concluſion of time, there ſhould be to them a world full of joy and exultation, and a renewal of the heaven and earth †; when,

* Zechar. viii. 7, 8. See alſo 2 Eſdras xiii. 25—51. Tobit xiv. 6, 7. Wiſd. iii. 7, 8.

† R. Saadias Gaon Sepher Hæmun. Rabbi Ketina in Gemar. Sanhedrim, apud Mede, B. III. p. 667. Some traces

when, agreeably to the aſſurance of Iſaiah, "the children of Iſrael ſhould ſeek the Lord "their God, and David their king, and "ſhould fear the Lord their God, and his "goodneſs in the latter days."

The Hebrew ſcriptures then, it appears, did predict an univerſal return of the tribes of Iſrael to their own land; the future converſion of the Jews and Gentiles; and the eſtabliſhment of a dominion of righteouſneſs, which ſhould extend its influence over the whole earth. Our Saviour and his apoſtles frequently alluded to, and confirmed theſe

traces of the belief in a future renovation of the world, with greater glory, and more important bleſſings, may be found in the Chaldæan and Egyptian theology; in the writings of Orpheus, of the ſybils, of Plato and Virgil: in the fragments of eaſtern theology, in the tranſcriptions of claſſical mythology, and in the ancient and modern notions of the Brachmans and other nations. Vid. Suidas in voce τυρρηνια Clem. Alex. Strom. V. Origen cont. Celſ. Lib. IV. Euſeb. Præp. Evang. Lib. VII. chap. xxiii. Maffeis's Hiſt. Ind. Lib. VI. Daubuz on Rev. xx. 2. and Sketches relating to the Hiſtory, Religion, &c. of the Hindoos, Vol. II. Sketch XIII. All nature ſeems to exhibit an analogy and pattern of a reſurrection, and renewal of things; and the ſacred writers promiſe new heavens and a new earth to coincide with the reign of righteouſneſs. Iſaiah lxvi. 17. 2 Peter iii. 13.

doctrines.

doctrines. Chriſt ſpoke of a future kingdom appointed to him by the father *; and inſtructed his diſciples to pray for the advancement of a kingdom yet to come †. He aſſured his diſciples, that the "goſpel "of the kingdom ſhould be preached in all "the world, for a witneſs unto all nations ‡;" and that then ſhould "the end come;" conſiſtently with which, in familiar illuſtration, he compared the kingdom of heaven, the goſpel diſpenſation, to a tree ſhooting out great branches, under the ſhadow of which the birds of the air might lodge §; and to a concealed leaven, which leavened the whole meal ‖. In denunciation of wrath upon

* Luke xxi. 31. xxii. 16, 29, 30. xvii. 20.

† Matt. vi. 10. The kingdom of God ſometimes means "the kingdom of glory" in the heaven; but it generally ſignifies the goſpel diſpenſation; and, in an eminent ſenſe, its perfect eſtabliſhment on earth, as in the place here cited. The kingdom of God was come in the time of Chriſt; Matt. xii. 28. Luke x. 9, 11. but, in an higher import, it was yet to come.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 14. This was not completed before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. It will be fulfilled before the deſtruction of the world.

§ Matt. iv. 32. Luke xiii. 19.

‖ Luke xiii. 21.

Jeruſalem,

Jeruſalem, he pronounced that it ſhould " be " trodden down of the Gentiles, until the " times of the Gentiles be fulfilled:" and, in prophecies not to be fully accompliſhed till the end of the world *, he declared, that the " generation," that is, the nation † of the Jews, " ſhould not paſs away till all " ſhould be fulfilled."

* The predictions which Chriſt uttered, on being ſhewn the temple, were not completely fulfilled at the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. His final coming is to be " ſudden, like lightning." The ſign of the Son of man is to appear immediately (or ſoon) after the tribulation, which began with the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and which was to laſt as long as it ſhould " be trodden " down" " till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." See Matt. xxiv. Mark xiii. Luke xxi. The firſt coming of Chriſt, to deſtroy Jeruſalem, was a type of his ſecond coming for the deſtruction of all his enemies; and the deſcription employed by our Saviour, is admirably contrived to comprehend both advents. See Dr. Trapp's Diſcourſe on Matt. xvi. 27, 28. Mede, Vol. II. Book IV. Epiſt. XII.

† Matt. xxiv. 30. γενεα, means nation, or race, as well as generation. See Matt. xxiv. 36. Luke xvii. 25. Chryſoſtom ſtyles the whole body of the Chriſtians γενεα: we might, perhaps, tranſlate εως αν παντα ταυτα γενηται; till all things ſhall be, or ſhall begin, γινομαι is naſcor, orior or fio; or otherwiſe the verſe muſt be underſtood to relate only to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem.

St. Paul

St. Paul alſo, in affectionate concern for the Iſraelites, " to whom pertaineth the " adoption and the glory, and the covenants, " and the giving of the law, and the ſervice " of God, and the promiſes; whoſe are the " fathers, and of whom, as concerning the " fleſh, Chriſt came," declareth, that " God " hath not caſt away his people," but " that " blindneſs, in part, is happened to Iſrael, " until the fulneſs of the Gentiles be come " in, and ſo all Iſrael ſhall be ſaved *."

The ſame apoſtle is, by ſome, ſuppoſed to ſpeak of the ſtate of Chriſt's dominion on earth, when he treats of " the manifeſtation " of the Sons of God, which ſhall be made, " and in which the creature ſhall be deli- " vered from the bondage of corruption into " the glorious liberty of the children of " God †."

He reveals to us, as a myſtery, that " all " ſhall not ſleep ‡;" and ſpeaks of ſome that ſhall " be alive," and remain unto the coming " of our Lord §;" and tells us, that as often as

* Rom. ix. 4, 5. xi. 2, 25, 26.
† Rom. viii. 19, 21.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 51.
§ 1 Theſſ. iv. 15.

we

we do participate of the communion of the body and blood of Chriſt, we " do ſhew forth " the Lord till his coming;" meaning, poſſibly, at that time when Chriſt is to partake of it new in his kingdom *.

The author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, treats of " a reſt that remaineth to the people " of God †;" and is ſuppoſed to ſpeak of the kingdom of Chriſt, under the expreſſion of the world to come, " which is not put in " ſubjection to angels ‡."

St. Peter, preaching concerning " the " Prince of Life," repreſents him as " received " by the heavens till the times of the reſtitu- " tion," or the accompliſhment of all things, in which account he has been conceived, by ſome writers, to allude to the period of the reign of ſaints, at the conſummation of which, Chriſt may be expected to appear §, " re-

* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

† Heb. iv. 9. alſo chap. ii. 5. and Mede, Vol. II. Book III. p. 716. Lib. XII. ch. 22—24.

‡ Heb. ii. 5. and Mede in loc. Vol. II. Book III. p. 1129, and Heb. i. 6.

§ Acts iii. 21. The paſſage, perhaps, no farther alludes to the millennium than that the accompliſhment of all things muſt be at the concluſion of that period.

" vealed

" vealed from heaven, with his mighty an-
" gels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance of
" them that know not God, and that obey
" not the goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt:
" who ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting
" deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord,
" and from the glory of his power, when
" he ſhall come to be glorified in his ſaints,
" and admired in all them that believe, in
" that day *."

He profeſſes alſo to look, according to God's promiſe, " for new heavens, and a " new earth, wherein dwelleth righteouſ-" neſs," which are to take place apparently, before the diſſolution of the world, by fire †.

The promiſes written by St. John, to the churches of Aſia, are ſometimes conſidered as alluſive to the ſtate of the ſaints, who are to participate of the reign of Chriſt ‡. Theſe paſſages, if they have ſingly been controverted, and conſidered as faint or ambiguous teſtimonies, muſt collectively be thought to reflect ſome evidence on the general doctrine of the future reign of Chriſt, the further

* 2 Theſſ. i. 7, 8. † 2 Peter iii. 13.
‡ Rev. ii. 11. iii. 21.

circum-

circumſtances of which are directly revealed in other parts of the book from which the text has been extracted.

From the earlieſt writings of the Chriſtians, we find that the ſcriptures were interpreted by them as authoriſing a belief in a future reign of Chriſt; and the expoſitors of the primitive faith appear very generally to have maintained the doctrine of the future eſtabliſhment of Chriſt's kingdom, with circumſtances of exultation and glory.

The firſt notice which we have of the opinion entertained upon this ſubject, by the primitive church, is that furniſhed by Barnabas, who was a contemporary of the apoſtles, and who is deſcribed, by St. Luke, as "a good man, and full of the Holy "Ghoſt, and of faith *." This writer, from the ſacred account of the creation of the world in ſix days, ſtates an opinion of an analogous diſpenſation, which is to take place of a correſpondent number of 6000 years, previous to the introduction of the ſabbath, in which all things are to be accompliſhed †.

* Luke xi. 24. Acts xiv. 14.

† Barnabas's Epiſt. § 15. See alſo § 11, and R. David Kimchi in Iſaiah xxxvi. 6. Pſalm xc. 4.

Juſtin

Juſtin Martyr, who flouriſhed in the ſecond century, profeſſes himſelf, "with all orthodox "Chriſtians, to believe in a future reſurrec- "tion of the fleſh, and a reign of a thouſand "years in the ſame Jeruſalem reſtored, adorn- "ed, and enlarged, for an influx of Gentiles "and Jews;" and repreſents the words of Iſaiah, "for as the days of a tree are the "days of my people, and mine elect ſhall "long enjoy the work of their hands *," to intimate myſteriouſly the thouſand years †.

Irenæus, who lived ſomewhat later, repreſents the "myſtery of the reſurrection of the "juſt and of the reign ‡, as the beginning of "incorruption; by which reign, thoſe who "ſhall be worthy, will, by degrees, become "accuſtomed to receive God;" that, "in "this renewed ſtate, the juſt, firſt riſing at the "appearance of God, will receive the promiſe "of their inheritance:" "for," ſays he, "in "that condition in which they laboured, or "were afflicted, approved in all things by "ſufferance, it is juſt that they ſhould, in

* Iſaiah lxv. 22.

† Juſt. Martyr, Part II. p. 313—315. Edit. Thirlb.

‡ That is, the reign of a thouſand years.

" that ſame, receive the fruits of their ſuffer-
" ings; and in that ſtate, in which they
" were ſlain for the love of God, in the ſame
" they ſhould revive; and in the ſame con-
" dition in which they ſuſtained ſervitude,
" in that they ſhould reign." In confirmation of which he refers to many paſſages in ſcripture *.

Tertullian, a writer alſo of the ſecond century, aſſerts, " that the Chriſtians confeſſed
" that an earthly kingdom was promiſed to
" them before the heaven, and in another
" ſtate, after the reſurrection for a thouſand
" years, in a city of divine conſtruction, an
" heavenly Jeruſalem, as deſcribed by Eze-
" kiel, and St. Paul and St. John, which is
" deſigned for the reception of the ſaints, to
" be compenſated by abundance of ſpiritual
" bleſſings, for the afflictions which on earth
" they ſuſtained." " After the thouſand
" years of this period," continues Tertullian,
" within which the reſurrection of the juſt
" riſing ſooner or later, according to their

* Iren. Hær. Lib. V. c. xxxii—xxxv. and Lib. V. c. xxx.

† Tertul. adver. Marcion, Lib. III. c. xxiv.

‡ Galat. iv. 26.

" merits,

" merits, will be completed; and after the " deſtruction of the world, and the conflagration of the judgment, the ſaints changed " in an inſtant, into angelical ſubſtances, will " be tranſlated, in the putting on of that incorruption, into an heavenly kingdom;" when, as he elſewhere expreſſes himſelf, " the temporal appearance of the world ſhall " be renewed, which, as a curtain, is ſpread " over the diſpenſations of eternity *; and " the whole human race ſhall be reſtored to " expunge what it ſhall have deſerved, of " good or evil, in this life:" " that Chriſt, " the high Prieſt of the circumciſed prieſthood, will then honor the circumciſion and " the race of Abraham with acceptance and " bleſſing †."

Lactantius alſo contends, afterwards, for the analogous ſabbath, at the conſummation of the ſix thouſand years ‡: and elſewhere affirms, " that the Son of God, after having " aboliſhed injuſtice, eſtabliſhed judgment, " and reſtored to life the juſt, who have

* Tertul. Apol.

† Tertul. adv. Marcion, Lib. V. c. ix.

‡ Lactant. de Vita Beata, Lib. VII. c. xiv.

" exiſted from the beginning, will live in " intercourſe with men a thouſand years, and " govern them with a juſt empire, agreeably " to what he repreſents the Cumæan Sybil " to have foretold; that then thoſe who ſhall " live in bodies ſhall not die, but ſhall, during " the thouſand years, beget an infinite mul- " titude; and their progeny ſhall be holy and " dear to God; and that they who ſhall be " raiſed ſhall preſide over the living as judges; " that ſome Gentiles ſhall be left to be van- " quiſhed by God, triumphed over by the " ſaints, and ſubjected to perpetual ſervitude;" that, " at the ſame time, the prince of dæmons, " who is the contriver of all evil, ſhall be " bound in cuſtody the thouſand years of the " heavenly reign, in which juſtice ſhall flouriſh " in the earth, leſt any evil ſhould be at- " tempted againſt the people of God, after " whoſe coming the juſt ſhall be collected " from every land, and the judgment being " finiſhed, the holy city ſhall be eſtabliſhed in " the midſt of the earth, in which God, the " architect, ſhall abide with the juſt, who " ſhall then reign." After the completion of the thouſand years, he affirms, " that " there will be a renewal of the world, and

" that

" that God ſhall transform men into the " ſimilitude of angels, for the eternal enjoy- " ment of the divine preſence; and the un- " juſt be condemned, after a general reſur- " rection, to eternal torments *." He profeſſes to ground theſe accounts on the teſtimony of the prophets.

Theſe early writers, then, who refer to the ſcriptures in ſupport of the doctrine of the millennium, did not derive it, as has been unjuſtly aſſerted †, merely from the tradition of Papias ‡, the friend of Polycarp,

* Lactant. de Vita Beata, Lib. VII. c. xxiv.—xxvii.

† Wotton Præf. in Clement. Epiſt. p. 14.

‡ Euſebius repreſents Papias, who was biſhop of Hierapolis, to have been a man of very ſlender underſtanding, (though he elſewhere deſcribes him as eloquent, and well verſed in ſcripture) as, he ſays, might appear from his writings. In the paſſage which this hiſtorian cites from them, Papias profeſſes to have derived traditionary intelligence from thoſe who had converſed as well with John, whom he ſtyles the Preſbyter, as with St. John the evangeliſt, and other diſciples of Chriſt. Euſebius conceives him to have derived the groſs notion of the millennium which miſled Irenæus and others from a too literal conſtruction of the myſtical accounts of the diſciples; and appears to intimate, that the notion of a thouſand years was derived from John the Preſbyter, and Ariſtion. Euſeb. Eccleſ. Hiſt. Lib. III. ch. xxxix.

who is repreſented, by Euſebius, to have affirmed, that, on enquiring diligently from each of thoſe who converſed with the apoſtles, what they might have been taught by them, he had collected, that Chriſt, returning from heaven, would perſonally reign a thouſand years on earth with his ſaints. The ſacred writings had certainly laid the foundation of the doctrine. The fathers, perhaps, interpreted the prophetic deſcriptions too literally; and they adopted notions reſpecting the future kingdom of Chriſt, which a juſt and reaſonable conſtruction of the inſpired promiſes will not authoriſe.

In ſome inſtances they certainly ſeem to have given too great a ſcope to their imaginations, in the deſcription of this kingdom; but we muſt remember, that it was a ſubject on which the fancy could not but dwell, which genius muſt have delighted to contemplate, and eloquence, with deſcriptive embelliſhment, to detail.

Where, indeed, theſe writers adopt the deſcriptions, and employ the figures which the prophets uſed, however glowing thoſe deſcriptions, however ſtrong thoſe figures may be, we have no right, in candour, to

ſuppoſe

ſuppoſe that they deſigned them to be underſtood in a more literal and carnal ſenſe than did the prophets themſelves.

The ſacred writers pourtray the period with every luxuriancy of painting, with diverſified imagery, and lively colours. In proſpect of the joyful return of the Jews to their long deſerted land, they invoke all nature, animate and inanimate, the heavens and earth to begin the ſongs of exultation and joy *. "The mountains, and the hills, "break forth into ſinging, and all the trees "of the field clap their hands †. They "call on Zion to awake, on the holy city to "ſhake itſelf from the duſt, and to put on "the garments of triumph and redemption ‡."

They welcome, in prophetic raptures, the meſſengers that appear with glad tidings, on the diſtant hills, and are deſcried by the watchmen from afar, who lift up their voice to proclaim the tidings of ſalvation, the arrival of thoſe, who publiſh unto Zion, "that her "God reigneth §."

* Iſaiah xlix. 13. lii. 9. † Iſaiah lv. 12. lx. 1.
‡ Iſaiah lii. § Iſaiah lii. 7.

They deſcribe the holy city, when built up, perſonified "as a virgin of Iſrael, adorned "with tabrets, and going forth in the dances "of them that make merry *;" "and as a "virgin married to a youthful and rejoicing "bridegroom †." A ſhouting is heard among the chief of the nations, and "the "remnant of Iſrael" is "gathered from the "coaſts of the earth, and with them the "blind and the lame, the woman with child, "and her that travaileth with child toge- "ther; a great company returning," with ſongs, to "the height of Zion, and flowing "together to the goodneſs of Zion, for "wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for "the young of the flock, and of the herd ‡." "Bringing their ſons in their arms, and "carrying their daughters upon their ſhoul- "ders §, to a land too narrow, by reaſon "of the inhabitants," "though their ad- "verſaries are far away ‖." "They bring "all their brethren for an offering to the "Lord, out of all nations, upon horſes, and

* Jerem. xxxi. 4.
† Iſaiah lxii. 5.
‡ Jerem. xxxi. 7—14.
§ Iſaiah xlix. 22.
‖ Iſaiah xlix.

"in

" in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules,
" and upon ſwift beaſts *." The land is
" covered with the multitude of camels †."
" The ſhips of Tarſhiſh ‡ ſail, laden with
" the riches of the people :" " the ſons of
" ſtrangers build up their walls, and kings
" miniſter unto them §." Judea is deſcribed as become " a delightſome land ||." " Her
" wilderneſs is made like Eden, and her
" deſert like the garden of the Lord; joy
" and gladneſs are found therein, thankſ-
" giving, and the voice of melody **."
" The glory of Lebanon again appears: its
" foreſts aſcend in luxuriant vegetation, to
" beautify the ſanctuary of the Lord ††;"
" and the thorn and the brier give place to

* Iſaiah lxvi. 20. † Iſaiah lx. 6.

‡ Iſaiah lx. 9. The ſhips of Tarſhiſh, which precede in the return, are the ſhips of the Mediterranean Sea: the ſea which waſhed the ſhores of Tarſus, in Cilicia. If Bochart were right, in placing Tarſhiſh near Ophir in India, the ſhips of Tarſhiſh may mean only ſhips from the moſt diſtant parts. It was, in any caſe, a place famous for trade, and therefore ſhips of Tarſhiſh may mean only ſhips of trade. See Bochart. Phaleg. Lib. II. c. xxvii.

§ Iſaiah lx. 10. || Malachi iii. 10.

** Iſaiah li. 3. †† Iſaiah lx. 13.

" the

" the fir tree and the myrtle *." Plenty waves in the barren valleys. " The paſ-
" tures of the wilderneſs do ſpring," and the vines mantle and cluſter on the " moun-
" tains of Samaria *." " The floors are full
" of wheat, and the fats overflow with wine
" and oil †." " The remnant of Jacob is
" in the midſt of many people, as a dew from
" the Lord, as the ſhowers upon the graſs,
" that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for
" the ſons of men ‡." " The remnant of
" Jacob is among the Gentiles in the midſt
" of many people as a lion among the beaſts
" of the foreſt, as a young lion among the
" flocks of ſheep §." The enemies of the people " lick the duſt like a ſerpent, and
" move out of their holes like worms of the
" earth ‖;" " and are trodden down, like
" aſhes, under the ſoles of their feet **."
Chriſt, " mighty to ſave" them, treadeth the winepreſs of the fierceneſs and wrath of Almighty God; and his garments are ſprinkled

* Jerem. xxxi. 5. † Joel ii. 24. Amos ix. 13—15. ‡ Micah v. 7. § Micah v. 7, 8.
‖ Micah vii. 17. ** Malachi iv. 3.

and

and ſtained with the blood of his adverſaries *.

What then if, in imitation of the enraptured prophets, the early writers of the church enliven the ſacred theme with the glowing tints of allegory! What, if they deſcribe the earth as voluntarily opening its plenty, and pouring out its abundant fruits, the rocks ſweating with honey, wines running down in ſtreams, and rivers flowing with milk †! they do but catch the eſtabliſhed images of inſpired deſcription, and pourtray natural and ſpiritual bleſſings, under authoriſed and poetic expreſſions. What, if in contemplation of the perfections of the New Jeruſalem, they deſcribe its ſplendor under repreſentations of earthly and material ornament, as compoſed of pure gold, and garniſhed with all manner of precious ſtones; and as watered by rivers of life, clear as cryſtal, proceeding from the throne of God ‡; at a period at which no

* Iſaiah lxiii. 3. and Lowth's notes to new tranſlation of Iſaiah. Rev. xix. 15.

† Lactant. Lib. VII. ch. xxiv. comp. with Joel ii. 18. Amos ix. 11.

‡ Revel. xxi. 10—21. xxii. 1. Zechar. xiv. 8, Iſaiah liv. 11, 12. Tobit xiii. 16—18.

light

light ſhall be required *; they do but emblematically delineate the ſame edifice that St. John had erected, and may be underſtood, in candid and fair conſtruction, to deſign only the ſplendid diſpenſations of a ſpiritual kingdom.

Faith and piety, doubtleſs, gazed ſometimes on the enraptured viſion, till they realiſed its figures, and forgot its allegory. The inſpired writers had, in figurative language, foretold, that, at the period of the expected peace, men ſhould hunger no more, nor thirſt; neither ſhould the heat nor ſun ſmite them †; that every man ſhould live, in unſuſpicious ſecurity, under the ſhadow of his own vine ‡; that they ſhould build houſes, and inhabit them, and plant vineyards and gardens, and eat the fruit of them §: and our Saviour figuratively aſſured the apoſtles, that they ſhould "eat and "drink at his table in his kingdom, and ſit "on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of

* Revel. xxii. 5. xxi. 2, 3. xxv. 26. Iſaiah lx. 11, 19.
† Iſaiah xlix. 10. Revel. vii. 16.
‡ Iſaiah lx. 11. lxv. 21.
§ Micah iv. 4.

"Iſrael;

"Iſrael*;" and too ſenſually the unreſtrained imaginations of the early writers contemplates, in groſs and carnal interpretation, a table literally prepared by God, and covered with artificial dainties. The fruit of the vine, of which Chriſt himſelf is to partake with his diſciples, in ſpiritual communion in his kingdom, is explained as literally to be enjoyed† in the convivial hilarity of an earthly jubilee‡. Fallen cities are poſitively to be rebuilt by aliens and kings, who are to be given to the ſaints as miniſters of their delights§. Goods and lands are to be encreaſed an hundred fold; and vineyards, and trees, and grains, branch out and bend, with unprecedented abundance, and ſpontaneouſly offer their productions with rival competition for acceptance‖.

* Luke xxii. 30.

† Euſeb. Eccleſ. Hiſt. Lib. VII. cap. xxiv. xxv. Apollin. ap Epiphan. Hæreſ. 77. p. 732.

‡ Even if we admit Chriſt's perſonal preſence in this reign, we cannot ſuppoſe him to be again ſubjected to the wants and infirmities of the fleſh.

§ Origen Περι αρχων, Lib. II. c. xii. Iſaiah lx. 10. lxi. 4.

‖ Irenæus, Lib. V. c. xxxiii.

Such

Such notions, carried to an extravagant exceſs, appear to have brought the doctrine into ſome diſcredit and reproach: that it was never univerſally received in the primitive church, has been contended by ſome, from the confeſſion of its advocates *, though it has been maintained by others that it was very generally admitted till the fourth century †. The truth ſeems to be, that a ſpiritual reign of Chriſt was believed by all who carefully examined the ſcriptures, though the popular notions of the millennium were often rejected ‡; and ancient, as well as modern writers, aſſailed the extravagant ſuperſtructure, not the ſcriptural foundation of the doctrine.

* Whitby's Treatiſe on the Millennium.

† Burnet maintains, that the millennium kingdom of Chriſt was the general doctrine of the church, from the times of the apoſtles to the Nicene council, which was held about A. D. 325. He ſuppoſes Dionyſius of Alexandria, who wrote againſt Nepos, an Egyptian biſhop, before the middle of the third century, to have been the firſt who attacked the doctrine; but Origen had previouſly aſſailed it in many of its fictitious additions.

‡ Gennad. Eccleſ. Dog. c. lv. Euſeb. Hiſt. Eccleſ. Lib. VII. c. xxiv. Phot. Cod. 232. p. 894.

Con-

Conſiſtently with this account, Juſtin Martyr admits that ſome Chriſtians, of a pure and pious judgment, did not acknowledge (that is, in a literal ſenſe) the reſtoration of Jeruſalem, and the aſſemblage of Chriſtians with Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Proſelytes, before Chriſt *; and Irenæus intimates, that the doctrine which he maintained, in its full extent, was not the univerſal ſentiment of the church, but that the promiſes were metaphorically underſtood †.

Origen, who was extravagantly devoted to allegorical interpretations of ſcripture, treats the carnal expoſition of the prophetic promiſes, relating to this doctrine, as received only by ſome, and thoſe of the ſimpler part of mankind, and as diſgraceful to chriſtianity ‡: and, agreeably alſo to this repreſentation, St. Jerom oppoſed the doctrine, which, he ſays, many eccleſiaſtics and martyrs maintained §; and St. Auſtin, who admitted the reign of ſaints, obſerves, that it

* Dialog. Part II. p. 310, 311.

† Iren. Hær. Lib. V. c. xxxii. xxxiii.

‡ Philocal. c. xxvi. p. 99. Prolegom. in Cant. fol. 69.

§ Hieron. Com. in Hierem. 1 & 10. in Eſaiam, c. xxx. Tom. III. p. 262. Edit. Bened. 478.

might be tolerable, if the advocates for the doctrine mentioned only ſpiritual delights, which the ſaints might enjoy by Chriſt's preſence, but objects to the notions of carnal and immoderate banquets of meat and drink, maintained by ſome *; and other writers, with equal propriety and conſiſtency, declaimed againſt the dreams and fanciful ſpeculations which were indulged in deſcribing the ſolemnities of marriage, the production of children, and the ſenſual enjoyments to be partaken of in this reſtored Eden, wantonly embelliſhed with the alluring fictions of a golden age, or ſtored with the voluptuous pleaſures of a Mahometan paradiſe †.

The doctrine then was a ſubject of diſcuſſion in the primitive church, and maintained and attacked, as at preſent, on very different grounds. It was ſometimes improperly defended on literal and judaical explications, but, probably, ſeldom or never en-

* Auguſt. de Civit. Dei. Lib. XX. c. vii. & ix.

† Origen Περι αρχων, Lib. II. ch. xxii. Com. in Matt. Edit. Huet. p. 498. Euſeb. Eccleſ. Hiſt. Lib. VII. c. xxiv. Gennad. Eccleſ. Dog. Phot. Cod. 232. p. 894. as cited by Whitby. Hieron. Procem. Lib. XVIII. Com. in Eſaiam.

tirely

tirely rejected. We have ſeen that the ſcriptures do predict a ſpiritual reign of Chriſt yet unaccompliſhed; and if we admit the earlier writers to have been capable of underſtanding thoſe ſcriptures, we muſt ſuppoſe them generally to have received the doctrine, however they might have loaded it with fictitious additions, unſupported but by pretenſions to unknown antiquity.

If, now, we deſire to confine the doctrine within its juſt boundaries, and to determine upon what grounds we are authoriſed to defend it, we find, that after rejecting ſuch particulars as are merely traditional or imaginary, ſome points muſt remain doubtful, in conſequence of the ambiguity of thoſe paſſages in ſcripture which relate to them. The principal queſtion upon which a difference of opinion has been maintained on this ſubject, is, Whether, in this predicted reign of Chriſt, we may expect his perſonal preſence on earth; or only the full and ſplendid eſtabliſhment of his religion. Allowing for the figurative ſtyle of ſcripture, all the paſſages in the Old Teſtament, which foreſhew extraordinary bleſſings at this period, may be conſidered as deſcriptive only of that happi-

neſs which may be expected under the influence of the divine favour, to reſult from the operation of religion, and the effects of univerſal peace and harmony among mankind, when wars ſhall ceaſe, "when ſwords ſhall "be turned into ploughſhares, and ſpears "into pruning hooks *." They do not, at leaſt, ſeem to require the ſuppoſition of the perſonal preſence of our Lord, even though we ſhould allow them to promiſe a miraculous bounty, conveying, by divine favour, an unprecedented felicity to the righteous.

In the New Teſtament, indeed, in paſſages, ſome of which have been before cited, Chriſt ſpeaks of drinking of the fruit of the vine in God's kingdom †, and of appointing a kingdom to his apoſtles, that they may eat and drink at his table, and ſit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael; and aſſures, to his faithful followers, that in the regeneration, when the Son of man ſhall ſit on the throne of his glory, they ſhall alſo ſit upon twelve thrones ‡. Theſe, and other

* Iſaiah ii. 4. Micah iv. 3.
† Matt. xxvi. 29. Mark xiv. 25. Luke xxii. 18.
‡ Matt. xix. 28. See Whitby.

paſſages,

paſſages, have been produced to prove, that Chriſt will literally re-appear, preceded, as has been ſuppoſed again, by his meſſenger * John, or Elias, to reign with his ſaints, who likewiſe are repreſented as to be then actually raiſed from the dead.

It may be queſtioned, however, whether Chriſt, in theſe places, does not refer to ſome ſpiritual appointments, accommodated to our conceptions by earthly repreſentations; or he probably alludes to particulars to be diſplayed in heaven, in the diſpenſations of eternity.

* Some writers maintain, that Elias, or ſome meſſenger in his ſpirit and power, is to precede the ſecond advent of Chriſt. They affirm, that the prophecies of Malachi, with regard to the meſſenger, principally relate to this ſecond coming of Elias, ſince he is to be ſent before "the great and dreadful day of the Lord," when Chriſt ſhall come, not in the meekneſs of his firſt appearance, "not breaking a bruiſed reed," but when he ſhall appear "like a refiner's fire." Malachi iii. 1—3. iv. 5, 6. They obſerve that Chriſt, after the death of the Baptiſt, ſaid, that "Elias ſhould come and reſtore all "things," though Elias, as he affirmed, was "come "already." See Matt. xvii. 10—13. and that Elias was to convert and reform the people, ſee Malachi iv. 6. and was ordained, according to the Son of Sirach, "to "turn the heart of the father unto the ſon, and to reſtore "the tribes of Jacob." Eccluſ. xlviii. 10. See Mede, B. I. Diſc. XXV. and Eyre on Prophecies, p. 86—92.

The ſtrongeſt paſſage which has been alledged in proof of the doctrine of the millennium, in its general acceptation, as ſuppoſing a perſonal reſidence of Chriſt, and a poſitive reſurrection of his ſaints, to reign with him on earth, is, probably, that produced in the text, which is uſually brought forward for that purpoſe by ancient and modern commentators. The cuſtomary interpretation of the paſſage, when adduced with this view, repreſents St. John to ſpeak of a firſt and proper reſurrection of thoſe who were beheaded * for the witneſs of Jeſus, and who had not worſhipped the beaſt; which reſurrection is, in this explanation, ſuppoſed to be antecedent to the general reſurrection for a thouſand years, during which the privileged and triumphant army of martyrs are to reign on earth.

In ſupport of this literal expoſition, it has been urged, that the promiſes made to the patriarchs and ſaints †, under the old

* Beheading was a Roman puniſhment. See alſo Revel. vi. 9—11. where the recompence of the millennium is apparently promiſed to the ſouls of them that were ſlain.

† Gen. xiii. 15. xv. 7. xxxv. 12, &c.

diſpen-

diſpenſation, will not be fully accompliſhed but by the poſitive reſurrection of their perſons, to inhabit the appointed land *; that the Jews, from the earlieſt time, believed in a literal reſurrection of their righteous forefathers to reign in Iſrael in the days of the Meſſiah, the beginning of which reign they did not expect till the day of judgment; that the primitive church looked for an abſolute reſurrection †; that there is no difficulty in the ſuppoſition, ſince it is certain, that after the reſurrection of Chriſt, many bodies of the ſaints which ſlept, aroſe, and appeared to many ‡; that the ſcripture ſeems, in plain terms, to ſpeak of a literal reſurrection of the ſaints §; and that many very judicious writers do maintain a double reſurrection ||,

* Matt. xxii. 31, 32. and Mede's Letter to Dr. Twiſs, Epiſt. XLIII. Rom. iv. 3. Gal. iii. 6. Acts vii. 5.

† Juſtin Martyr, Lactant. Lib. VII. c. xxiv. Mede ſuppoſes, that from this expectation of the primitive church, might originate the practice of praying for the dead, as founded upon a hope that they might have a part in the firſt reſurrection.

‡ Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

§ Revel. v. 10. xx. 4. Wiſd. iii. 8.

|| Mede, Vol. II. Book IV. Epiſt. 20. Daubuz in Rev. xx. 4.

agreeably to the declaration of St. Paul; that "the dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt *;" that "every man ſhall be made alive in his own "order, Chriſt the firſt fruits, afterward "they that are Chriſt's at his coming, and "then cometh the end †;" and to what St. John ſaw, "that the reſt of the dead lived not again until the thouſand years were finiſhed ‡."

A learned writer, however, whoſe diſcourſe on the millennium has been received as a very judicious explication of the doctrine, and who oppoſes the notion of a literal deſcent of Chriſt, and a literal reſurrection of his ſaints, maintains, that St. John ſpeaks not of the bodies, but of the ſouls of them that are beheaded §, who are ſaid to live, contrary,

* 1 Theſſ. iv. 16, 17. St. Paul may, however, by the dead in Chriſt, mean only the faithful in general; and may uſe the word "firſt" with relation to thoſe that remain, and ſhall be caught up.

† 1 Cor. xv. 23.

‡ Rev. xx. 5. Whitby and Lowman underſtand, by "the reſt of the dead," the opponents of chriſtianity; thoſe ſlain by the ſword, in chap. xix. 21. who ſhall not recover their power till the thouſand years ſhall be accompliſhed, when their ſpirit may revive in an anti-chriſtian party for a little ſeaſon.

§ Whitby ſays, that the word ψυχη, which he ſtates to occur ſix times in the book of Revelation, ſignifies always,

contrary, as this writer aſſerts, to the general ſtyle of ſcripture, when it ſpeaks of the reſurrection of the dead, of their perſons or bodies. He admits that, indeed, a firſt reſurrection is mentioned, in which thoſe who are bleſſed and holy, and over whom the ſecond death hath no power*, have a part; a reſurrection before the day of judgment, and before the ſea, and death, and the grave, deliver up their dead †; and before Chriſt's coming, to render to every man as his works ſhall be ‡. But he maintains, that the privileged partakers of this firſt reſurrection need not neceſſarily be conſidered as martyrs, and unpolluted worſhippers of God, actually recalled from the ſtate of departed ſpirits to the earth; a notion, as he repreſents, ſeemingly inconſiſtent with the known ſtate of the dead §; and apparently

always, either the ſoul in a ſtate of ſeparation, or the living ſoul; and that a literal reſurrection is never repreſented in the New Teſtament by expreſſions of "the "living of the ſoul," but by that of "the raiſing of "the dead," or "the bodies of them that ſlept."

* xx. 6. † xx. 12, 13.

‡ Revel. xxii. 12.

§ 2 Cor. v. viii. Philip. i. 23. Luke xxiii. 43.

repugnant to the general doctrine of the reſurrection *: but rather perſons in whom the ſpirit and zeal which animated the martyrs ſhall be revived, as is declared, agreeably to that mode of expreſſion by which St. John the Baptiſt is deſcribed as Elias, whom he reſembled in circumſtance, office, and character; perſons, then, on whom the undefiled features of Chriſtian perfection ſhall be exhibited, and who ſhall then be prieſts of God and of Chriſt †; that the reign of Chriſt is deſcribed as preceding the general judgment, and therefore cannot well be ſuppoſed to be a ſtate of reſurrection to departed ſaints, who rather may be conceived to await, in ſome intermediate ſtate, the deciſion of their final doom ‡; and the learned writer, therefore,

* The general reſurrection is to be ſudden. See Matt. xxiv. 39. Revel. xx. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 21, 51, 52. St. Jerom obſerves upon this laſt verſe, that it "excludes "the whole fable of a firſt and ſecond reſurrection." Epiſt. XX. Tom. III. fol. 66.

† 1 Peter ii. 5, 6. Exod. xix. 6. Iſaiah lxv. 20.

‡ It is alledged alſo, that they who ſhall be revived with Chriſt will partake of the enjoyment of his preſence, not only for a thouſand years, but for ever; and Job is cited, where he ſays, "Man riſeth not till the heavens be no more." Job xiv. 12.

thinks

thinks that the ſtate may be conſidered only as a condition of unprecedented triumph to the righteous perſons, who ſhall be then living examples of Chriſtian perfection; when "he that overcometh, and keepeth God's "works unto the end, to him will he give "power over the nations *," and "grant "to ſit with him on his throne †," a member of that church, which ſhall then flouriſh, as it were, by a reſurrection ‡, in purity and power on earth, where it hath been often ſeen harraſſed, and buried, as it were, in affliction.

This figurative expoſition of a paſſage, in a book highly figurative, is at leaſt plauſible. Without preſuming poſitively to decide on a point, upon which ſuch oppoſite opinions have been maintained, it may be remarked, that a firſt reſurrection of the ſaints to reign with Chriſt, that is, in the profeſſion of his faith, and in the enjoyment of his favour, may, perhaps, be admitted without the ne-

* Revel. ii. 26. † iii. 21.

‡ Iſaiah xxvi. 19. Jerem. xxxi. 15, 16. Ezek. xxxvii. Hoſea vi. 1, 2. Rom. xi. 15. vi. 1, 2. St. John employs the ſame expreſſions uſed by the prophets to deſcribe the glory of the Jewiſh church.

ceſſity

ceſſity of ſuppoſing our Lord's perſonal preſence, any farther than by the manifeſtation of a divine authority, and in the more evident diſplay of protection to the church, over which, from the beginning, he promiſed to preſide *.

The idea of Chriſt's perſonal appearance, in the viſible ſupremacy of his church, in its glorious ſtate, may, indeed, be conceived abſtractedly from the intermixture of thoſe earthly circumſtances, which ſuggeſt themſelves to our groſs imaginations, and which might appear to degrade the dignity of his exalted character. We know alſo, that the divine majeſty was not contaminated by an intercourſe with his creatures in Paradiſe; and Chriſt voluntarily ſubmitted himſelf, without injury to the godhead, to ſuſtain the infirmities of the fleſh; but though "the ſun "of righteouſneſs" might again riſe on earth, unobſcured by its vapours, we are not, it is conceived, fully authoriſed to expect its appearance "till the heavens and earth ſhall "paſs away, and melt with fervent heat;" ſince, we are told, that the heavens muſt

* Matt. xxviii. 20.

receive

receive him until the laſt day of conſummation, the times of reſtitution, or reſtoration of all things *: and it may be diffidently maintained, that no ſufficient proofs can be drawn, either from the Old or the New Teſtament, of the poſitive appearance of Chriſt till that of his final advent to judge the world in righteouſneſs, when he ſhall come, not for abode on earth, but, like lightning out of the eaſt; with ſudden and full diſplay of power, when the "ſign of the "Son of man ſhall appear in heaven," and "the Son of man ſhall be ſeen coming in the "clouds of heaven, with power and great "glory," at the end of the world, as was expected by the diſciples †, to diſcomfit thoſe enemies whom Satan releaſed for a ſhort period, ſhall ſeduce to deſtruction ‡; and,

* Acts iii. 21.

† Matt. xxiv. 39. Chriſt, indeed, informs us, that he is to appear in portentous circumſtances immediately after the tribulation, which is ſuppoſed to ſucceed the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. The period of his reign, which is the prelude of his ſecond advent, being included in the conſideration of this final diſpenſation.

‡ If Chriſt were perſonally to abide on earth, it would be difficult to conceive by what infatuation the enemies of the church could be drawn to encompaſs and aſſail his ſaints.

finally,

finally, to diſtribute impartial judgment to the world.

Whatever deciſion may be approved upon this ſubject, it is clear that the prophetic declarations promiſe the univerſal eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity, in purity and truth, to be preceded by the fall of that antichriſtian power, of which the character is deſcribed as ſo repugnant and hoſtile to the ſpirit of the church *; as alſo by the general converſion of the Jews, to whom, in an eſpecial ſenſe, the promiſes belong; to whom, as to "the loſt ſheep," the miniſter of the circumciſion † was firſt ſent, and the remnant

* 2 Theſſ. ii. 8. Revel. xix. 20. Dan. vii. 26. Hence, perhaps, we may collect the reaſon why the Romaniſts rejected the general doctrine of the reign of ſaints, which Baronius treats as heretical. They conſidered Chriſt as already reigning in a triumphant church by his vicar.

† Rom. xv. 8. Acts xi. 19. xv. 46. Rom. ii. 10. Mr. Mede ſuggeſts, that the condition of St. Paul, previouſly to his converſion, reſembles that of the Jews, in their obſtinacy againſt Chriſt and the Chriſtians; and that his converſion, ſo differing from that of all other men that ever were, might be a pledge or pattern of ſomething that ſhould be vouchſafed to his nation. See 1 Tim. i. 16. and Mede's Anſwer to Dr. Twiſs, Vol. II. Book IV. Epiſt. 14.

of

of whom ſhall be a ſecond time aſſembled from the four corners of the earth, an enſign for the nations *; that, as "through their "fall, ſalvation came unto the Gentiles †;" "as the caſting away of them was the re-"conciling of the world, ſo the receiving "of them ſhould be life from the dead ‡;" ſhould be the means of conciliating the Gentiles, whoſe univerſal converſion is then alſo to take place, when incredulity ſhall at laſt yield to the ſuffrage of general conviction, and the light of revealed wiſdom be diffuſed in tranſcendent ſplendor ||.

It has been thought to admit of ſome diſpute **, whether the promiſes of the future reſtoration of the Jews ſhould lead us to expect their literal return to Jeruſalem, poſitively to be rebuilt; or whether they ſhould

* Iſaiah xi. 10—12. xlv. 22. xxviii. 61. lx. 4, 9. lxi. 6, 7, 10.

† Zechar. viii. 13. Rom. xi. 12. Matt. x. 5, 6. xv. 24.

‡ Rom. xi. 12—15.

§ Rom. xi. 25, 26. Iſaiah lx. 35. lxvi. 18.

|| Iſaiah lx. 19. Revel. xxi. 23.

** Dr. Gregory Sharpe denied the future reſtoration of the Jews. See the Riſe and Fall of the Holy City and Temple of Jeruſalem.

be underſtood to import only their general converſion, in an improved ſtate of the church, deſcribed as a New Jeruſalem; but theſe promiſes are ſo ſtrong, and ſo frequently repeated, ſo apparently poſitive, and literal in their meaning, ſo detailed with local circumſtance and allotment *, and, at the ſame time, ſo capable of literal accompliſhment, that if collectively and maturely conſidered, they will, probably, be allowed to juſtify a belief in the abſolute return of the Jews, to dwell in the land which God gave to their fathers; "to repair the waſte places, the "deſolations of many generations †," "that "the redeemed of the Lord may return, and "come with ſinging to Zion, with ſong and "everlaſting joy on their head ‡;" to raiſe up Jeruſalem itſelf as the metropolis of the church, "in the light of which the Gen-"tiles ſhall walk;" in which a viſible church, and ſpiritual temple, may be expected, as beheld in viſion by Ezekiel §; that "upon

* Obadiah 17, 21. Ezek. xxxvi. 28. Jerem. xxxi. 38—41. Zechar. xiv. 10, 11. Tobit xiii. 19.

† Iſaiah lxi. 4. Luke xxi. 24.

‡ Iſaiah li. 11.

§ Ezek. xlviii.

"Mount

" Mount Zion there ſhould be deliverance;
" and there ſhould be holineſs; and the houſe
" of Jacob ſhould poſſeſs their poſſeſſions;
" and that they ſhould worſhip the Lord in
" his holy mount at Jeruſalem *."

At this period, then, " the ſpirit of grace
" ſhall be opened upon the houſe of David,
" and upon the inhabitants of Jeruſalem,
" the ſpirit of grace and of ſupplications:
" and they ſhall look upon him whom they
" have pierced, and they ſhall mourn for
" him as one mourneth for his only ſon;
" and ſhall be in bitterneſs as one that
" is in bitterneſs for his firſtborn †. And it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that at Jeruſalem, which was the ſcene of our Redeemer's ſufferings, there he ſhould diſplay his triumph: that where the peculiar people of God ſuſtained his wrath, there they ſhould experience his mercy ‡, when " the city which
" has been forſaken, and hated, and trodden
" down, ſhall be made an eternal excellency,
" a joy of many generations §."

* Iſaiah xxvii. 13. † Zechar. xii. 10. John xix. 37. Revel. i. 7.

‡ Joel iii. 1, 2. 11—14. Iſaiah lx. 10. Zech. xii. 12. § Iſaiah lx. 15.

This

This account is conſiſtent with the earlieſt opinions entertained by the church; and there are no difficulties attending the expectation that require a more miraculous interpoſition in favour of the Jews, than has already been diſplayed in their wonderful preſervation.

It is, notwithſtanding, evident, that the divine promiſes do not, as the Jews ſuppoſe, extend to any reſtoration of the Moſaic ſervice, with its rites and ceremonies: a preparatory ſervice, typical only of better things; nor to any re-eſtabliſhment of the Jewiſh temple: the tranſient figure of a more perfect "tabernacle, which the Lord pitched*;" nor to a renewal of the Jewiſh polity, inſtituted for temporary purpoſes. The ſhadows are now rejected behind the brightneſs of the ſubſtance: the glory of the former temple will be forgotten in the ſuperior ſplendor of the Chriſtian church, when the righteouſneſs of "Zion ſhall go forth as brightneſs, and "the ſalvation thereof as the lamp that "burneth†." God will reſtore to his people

* Haggai ii. 6—9. Amos ix. 11—15. 2 Cor. iii. 3—11. Heb. viii. 2, 13. ix. 2, 11, 24. Tobit xiv. 51, 67.

† Iſaiah lxii. 1.

their

" their judges as at firſt, and their counſel-
" lors as at the beginning *," when " Zion
" ſhall be redeemed with judgment, and her
" converts with righteouſneſs:" when he ſhall eſtabliſh the ſubſtantial equity of his laws, and the concerted wiſdom of his decrees; then, indeed, we ſhall behold not a reſtoration of the reſtricted ordinances of a peculiar people, but the comprehenſive diſpenſation of an univerſal government: in the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian church, of which the congregated members ſhall conſtitute one ſociety of kings and prieſts †; and the tabernacle of God ſhall be with men, and he will " dwell with them," by his influence, and they ſhall be his people, and God himſelf ſhall be with them, and be their God; in that New Jeruſalem in which St. John ſaw no temple, no local reſort of worſhip; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb,

* Iſaiah i. 26, 27. The Jews retain the words of this prophecy in their ſynagogue ſervice, in the prayer for the reſtoration of their tribes, expecting its future literal accompliſhment.

† Exod. xix. 6. Iſaiah lxi. 6. Rev. v. 10. xx. 6.

‡ Rev. xx. 3. comp. with Ezekiel xxxvii. 26, 27.

are the temple of it *; when a reign of ſaints ſhall take place, compoſed of faithful ſervants of God, actually raiſed from the grave, or of perſons in whom the ſpirit of the antient martyrs ſhall be revived; to whom primœval longevity is promiſed for the duration of a thouſand years †, while Satan ſhall be ſhut up, ſecurely debarred from malevolent exertion and deception.

Were we farther to dilate on the deſcription of this period, we might repreſent it as a ſtate in which the higheſt effects of earthly recompence will be experienced; in which, though an abſolute theocracy may not prevail, the more immediate ſuperintendance of God will be experienced, as well in the open teſtimonies of his power, as perchance by

* Revel. xxi. 22. The temple will then be ſpiritual, as Barnabas explains it, τοτε ναος οικοδομη μενος τω κυριω. Epiſt. § 16.

† The thouſand years may apply to the period of the continuance of the church in a ſtate of proſperity: longevity will, probably, be then granted to all; but Iſaiah ſpeaks of a ſhorter duration of life to individuals than the term of a thouſand years. lxv. 20. A thouſand years may, perhaps, be a definite term, to be underſtood in an indefinite ſenſe, as importing only a long time. 2 Pet. iii. 8.

the

the viſible irradiation of the divine glory; a ſchechinah which, in the ſurpaſſing ſplendor of its everlaſting light, may, like the ſun, impart its beams without relinquiſhing its exalted ſtation in the heavens *; which may ſtream out in more plentiful effuſion of the ſpirit †, to the illumination of thoſe ſaints, whoſe minds ſhall be ſpiritualiſed for the reception of higher communications: a ſtate, in which the paſſions ſhall be calmed in ſubjection to the control of the Lord; in which, releaſed from anxious cares, and ſecular ſolitude, the privileged poſſeſſors of the kingdom may gather the firſt fruits of the tree of life reſtored; from which the other tree, that ſtood in the midſt of Paradiſe, the occaſion of ſin, ſhall be removed; and in which men may, perhaps, as in Paradiſe, enjoy ſome exalted communications with God, and expe-

* Iſaiah xxx. 26. lx. 19, 21. Revel. xxi. 23, 24. Preciſe and accurate deſcription, on a ſubject ſo ſpeculative, cannot be given; general and conjectural illuſtrations may be offered with becoming diffidence. The divine preſence is to be reſtored in the ſpiritual temple, deſcribed by Ezekiel xliii. 2—5. Spiritual ſacrifices alſo are to be there offered.

† Joel ii. 29, 30. Iſaiah xliv. 3. lx. 19.

rience his apparent and immediate countenance; "when mercy and truth ſhall meet "together, righteouſneſs and peace ſhall kiſs "each other;" when offenſive paſſions ſhall ceaſe, and abhorrent tempers coaleſce and agree *; "when there ſhall be no more "death †, neither ſorrow, nor ſhedding of "tears; neither ſhall there be any more "pain;" "when violence ſhall be no more "heard in the land, nor waſting and deſtruc-"tion within its borders; but they ſhall call "the walls of Zion Salvation, and its gates "Praiſe ‡;" when, conſiſtently with the progreſſive diſplay of God's power, ſome portentous and more glorious manifeſtation of his attributes may be made; and ſome image of his final diſpenſations, in a future judgment, may be furniſhed in the elevation

* Iſaiah xi. 6—8.

† Revel. xxi. 4. If the expreſſion "of no more "death," be not figurative, St. John will, probably, be thought, in this place, to ſpeak of the New Jeruſalem in the ſtate in which it ſhall exiſt after the final deſtruction of the world; for Iſaiah ſeems to repreſent the inhabitants of the New Jeruſalem of the millennium, as liable to death. See Iſaiah lxv. 20.

‡ Iſaiah lx. 18.

of

of the meek, and in the recompence of the deſerving; when "the lofty looks of man "ſhall be humbled, and the haughtineſs of "men ſhall be bowed down, and the Lord "alone ſhall be exalted in that day *," in which the efficacy, and full intention of chriſtianity, will be triumphantly ſhewn; when, in a more eminent ſenſe, men ſhall "come "unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the "living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem, and "to an innumerable company of angels, "to the general aſſembly and church of the "firſt-born, which are written in heaven; "to God the judge of all, and to the ſpirits "of juſt men made perfect, and to Jeſus the "mediator of a new covenant, and to the "blood of ſprinkling that ſpeaketh better "things than that of Abel †."

* Iſaiah ii. 11.

† Heb. xii. 22—24. This paſſage is deſcriptive of the Chriſtian diſpenſation, as diſplayed at the firſt advent of Chriſt. It has a farther reference to the final eſtabliſhment of that diſpenſation; and it reſpects, in an eminent ſenſe, the circumſtances to be enjoyed in the eternal manſions of the bleſſed. The deſcriptions of ſcripture have ſucceſſive gradations in their advancement to completion.

The true church of Chriſt, the New Jeruſalem, is repreſented with ſome apparent ambiguity by St. John, "as coming down from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her huſband*," after he has given an account of the new heavens and the new earth being eſtabliſhed, and of the firſt heaven and firſt earth being paſſed away †; though in a preceding account, relating to the period of the reign of ſaints, the church is repreſented as a bride ready, and arrayed for the reception of the Lamb, before the deſcription of the renewal of the material world. Hence it has been diſputed, whether the apoſtle, in deſcribing the new heaven and the new earth, in which there ſhall be no more ſea, nor death, treat of the circumſtances which are to ſucceed the final reſurrection to an eternal ſabbath, or whether he ſtill ſpeak of the reign of ſaints on earth.

* Revel. xxi. 2. "Coming down from God out of "heaven," means only adorned with heavenly graces. See Epheſ. i. 3. So it is ſtyled "Jeruſalem, which is "above," in Gal. iv. 26. and "the heavenly Jeruſa-"lem," Heb. xii. 22. See alſo Mark xi. 30.

† Rev. xxi. 2. comp. with Iſaiah lxv. 17. lxvi. 22.

Thoſe

Thoſe who ſuppoſe the apoſtle to obſerve a ſtrict order in the ſucceſſion of events, and contend that the new heaven and the new earth are not to take place till after the general judgment, ſupport their opinion by obſerving, that if, in the new earth, there is to be no more ſea, nor death, it muſt be after the general judgment, when the ſea is to give up its dead, and when death, the laſt enemy, is to be ſubdued; and farther, by contending for the literal explication of the deſcription, which repreſents the New Jeruſalem as coming down from God out of heaven; but as the expreſſions of no ſea *, and no death †, may, perhaps, be underſtood in a figurative ſenſe; and as the New Jeruſalem, however deſcending and adorned, is deſcribed

* Bp. Newton on Prophecies, Vol. III. on Rev. c. 21. The expreſſion of "no ſea," has been underſtood, as the learned writer obſerves by many, to imply, figuratively, no troubles or commotions in the new world. The other arguments urged by him diſappear, if the explications, offered in the courſe of this diſcourſe, are received.

† "No death," may imply no terrors of death. See p. 324. note †. Or St. John may be ſuppoſed to ſpeak of the millennium, as typically comprehending the ſtate which is to follow the general reſurrection.

as reſiding on earth, we may agree rather with thoſe who maintain that St. John ſtill ſpeaks of the period of the reign of ſaints, ſince he deſcribes the New Jeruſalem in the ſame manner as the prophets had pourtrayed the Hebrew church in its glorified ſtate; and we may underſtand, by the new heaven and the new earth, thoſe alterations in the material world, which, agreeably to the opinion of antiquity, may then be expected to take place *; or conceive the expreſſions to import

* Burnet ſuppoſes the millennium to take place under the new heaven and the new earth, after the conflagration of the world; and endeavours to eſtabliſh his opinion by the paſſage from St. Peter, in which the apoſtle profeſſes to look for a new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs, to take place, in Burnet's apprehenſion, after the diſſolution of the world by fire. 2 Peter iii. 12, 13. and, by obſerving farther, that the preſent conſtitution of nature will not bear, nor be conſiſtent with the happineſs promiſed in the millennium; as alſo that the kingdom will not take place till Antichriſt be deſtroyed: an event not to happen, as he conceives, till the appearance of Chriſt, before the beginning of the millennium, and not till the end of the world. See Revel. xix. 20. 2 Theſſ. i. 7, 8. ii. 8. Acts iii. 21. At the ſame time, Burnet imagines, that a firſt partial judgment will take place; in proof of which he refers to Dan. vii. 26. Revel. xi. 15—18. 2 Tim. iv. 1. The laſt

port only ſome moral changes, thus figuratively depicted, and repreſented by St. John, in the order of his diſcourſe, as taking place towards the end of the millennium, becauſe then diſplayed in their full completion.

Upon this ſuppoſition it muſt alſo be admitted, that St. John, after detailing proleptically the circumſtances of the laſt judgment, reverts to the ſubject of the reign of a thouſand years, thus glancing in the uncontrolled ſpirit of prophecy, with deſultory tranſition, from period to period, and occaſionally reverting to dilate on ſubjects firſt curſorily brought forward: preſenting, in one grand diſplay, the beginning and end of the day of judgment *, which, extending through a thou-

laſt enemies to appear towards the concluſion of the millennium, he ſtrangely conceives, may be ſons of the earth, generated from the ſlime of the ground, and the heat of the ſun, as he repreſents brute creatures to have been originally raiſed. Burnet's Theory, Vol. II. Book IV. Others have thought, that the eternal manſions of the bleſſed will be on earth. See Hody of the Reſurrection.

* A day with God is a day of a thouſand years, a day of eternity. 2 Peter iii. 8. The whole time of Chriſt's firſt coming is called a day; ſo alſo the time of the abode in the wilderneſs. Heb. iii. 8, 9. See alſo Deut. xxxii. 35. Mede is of opinion, that the kingdom of the Son of

a thouſand years, comprehends the commencement of the deſtruction of Chriſt's enemies, and the final annihilation of all oppoſing powers in the ultimate diſpenſation of his wrath; "when cometh the end when "he ſhall have delivered up the kingdom to "God even the Father; when he ſhall have "put down all rule and all authority, and all "power; for he muſt reign until he hath "put all enemies under his feet; the laſt "enemy that ſhall be deſtroyed is death."

of man, and of the ſaints of the moſt High, ſpoken of by Daniel and St. John, begins with the deſtruction of the great beaſt, and the ſeſſion of judgment. Dan. vii. 9—22. John xx. 4. but that as the judgment is not to be conſummate till the end of the thouſand years, the whole thouſand years is called the day of judgment, the period which is to begin with the ſounding of the ſeventh trumpet. Revel. xi. 15. in which the appearance of Chriſt is to be uſhered in by ſome preparatory circumſtances. The Jews ſpoke of the day of judgment with this latitude, ſuppoſing it to mean a period of long continuance; and ſome believed of a thouſand years. This opinion of Mede differs from that of the Chiliaſts, who thought that the reign of ſaints would ſucceed the judgment, ſince it repreſents the two diſpenſations as contemporary. See Mede, Vol. II. Book IV. Epiſt. XV. Book III. c. xi.

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The prophets, in general, ſeem to ſpeak of the New Jeruſalem as of an earthly ſtate, contemporary with the peaceful and proſperous dominion of Chriſt *; and if, agreeably

* It may be obſerved, in agreement with Mr. Mede's opinion, that the marriage of the Lamb, and the reign of Chriſt, begin with the deſtruction of Babylon (Rome); that the period of the New Jeruſalem correſponds with the ſounding of the ſeventh trumpet, and that the New Jeruſalem muſt coincide with the reign of ſaints, ſince the period of the palm-bearing tribe, who are deſcribed in the ſame manner as the citizens of the New Jeruſalem, is to ſucceed that of the tribe of the 144,000 who are ſigned, and who were contemporary with the beaſt; Rev. vii. 9—17. and ſince, after the 1000 years, the New Jeruſalem is to be encompaſſed with enemies. Rev. xx. 9. It ſhould be remarked farther, that after the ſeventh vial is poured out, by which the beaſt is deſtroyed, a voice comes from the throne; and he who ſits on the throne ſays to St. John, who is looking at the New Jeruſalem, "Behold, I make all things new." Ch. iii. 16, 17. xxi. 5, 6. The New Jeruſalem, then, begins with the laſt period of the vial, the whore being deſtroyed; and it therefore ſynchroniſes with the interval from the deſtruction of the beaſt. Laſtly, one of the angels ſhews the New Jeruſalem, the Bride of the Lamb, as about to appear immediately after the pouring out of the vials, and the deſtruction of the beaſt, and of Babylon. ch. xxi. 20. It therefore coincides with the time of the reign of ſaints. See Mede's Clavis Apocalypt. Book III. p. 2. Synchron. 6, 7.

to

to the ſentiments of antient writers *, we admit the renovation of the world to coincide with the reign of ſaints, we may ſuppoſe, as was before obſerved, the new heaven and the new earth, ſpoken of by Iſaiah and St. John, either to be deſcriptive of a literal renovation of the material world, to be effected in the analogous extent of that reſurrection which all things intimate; and in conformity with the beneficial character of the expected period, when the earth may be releaſed from the curſe pronounced upon it †, and recover, under the influence of more friendly ſkies, the vigor of its original fertility, and undergo ſuch mutations as may correſpond with the

* See p. 289—292. Iren. Lib. V. c. xxxv. Tertul. de Spectac. c. xxx. Lactantius, indeed, with ſome ambiguity, appears to repreſent the renovation as ſucceeding the millennium. Lib. VII. c. xxvi.

† Rev. xxii. 3. 2 Peter iii. 10—13. St. Peter, by the order of his diſcourſe, may appear to have looked for new heavens and a new earth at the day of judgment, and the diſſolution of the world; but if, agreeably to Dr. More's interpretation, we ſuppoſe the apoſtle, by new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteouſneſs, to ſpeak of a change to take place before the general conflagration, his declaration may be adduced in ſupport of the doctrine of the ſpiritual reign of Chriſt.

improved

improved condition of the moral world; or we may conceive the new heaven and the new earth * to imply, allegorically, ſome great and glorious circumſtances of an undefined and ſpiritual nature, thus figuratively promiſed, which is conſiſtent with St. Peter's declaration, "that the heaven and the earth, "which are now, are kept in ſtore, reſerved "unto fire againſt the day of judgment and "perdition of ungodly men †."

In conformity with both opinions above ſtated, the reign of ſaints may be ſuppoſed to exhibit, on earth, an anticipated repreſentation of the diſpenſations of eternity, and

* The expreſſions may, perhaps, mean a new government and a new people. Maimonides underſtood the new heaven and the new earth to be deſcriptive of the perpetual joy, to take place of former ſorrow, at the period here ſpoken of. See More Nevoch. Part II. c. xxix. p. 268. Mede, upon an interpretation of the expreſſions of heaven and earth, as oriental metaphors, for the exalted perſonages, and lower ranks of the political world, ſlightly ſuggeſts, that the predicted deſtruction of theſe may import the demolition of the world, of wicked ſtates, and men high and low. See ſimilar modes of expreſſion in Haggai ii. 6, 7, 21, 22. Iſaiah xxxiv. 4, 5. and Mede, Vol. II. Book III. p. 761, 762.

† 2 Peter iii. 7.

what

what is applicable to the type is more eminently deſcriptive of the thing typified; and, on this ground, the New Jeruſalem may be conſidered, while on earth, as a figure of the habitation of the righteous in the ſtate of final reward. It is a portraiture of that church, which, exiſting firſt in ſplendid circumſtances on earth, ſhall ſurvive, with unſhaken ſecurity, and increaſing luſtre, the changes and wreck of the ſublunary world, ſafe amidſt conflagration *, and unimpaired by the deſtruction of the material elements, as deſigned to be tranſlated into heaven, and to flouriſh in a purified and exalted ſtate, harmoniſed and fitly joined in the union of its conſiſtent parts, and crowned with the viſible glory of its head, from eternity to eternity †.

The concluſion of the reign of ſaints is to be diſtinguiſhed by their general victory over thoſe confederate enemies, whom Satan releaſed for a ſhort time, ſhall ſeduce to de-

* That the world is to be finally deſtroyed by fire, is a tradition of the remoteſt antiquity, and ratified, we have ſeen, by the ſacred writings.

† Dan. vii. 14. Luke i. 33. 1 Cor. xv. 24. Rev. xi. 15.

ſtruction.

ſtruction *. A victory, to be effected by miraculous interpoſition, in favour of the ſaints, whom they ſhall encompaſs †; after which, the devil and the beaſt and the falſe prophet, ſhall be caſt into eternal torments. An univerſal reſurrection ſhall take place ‡, and the white throne of judgment ſhall be diſplayed with him that ſitteth on it for judgment; before whoſe face the earth and the heavens

* Hence Chriſt ſays, nevertheleſs, when the Son of man cometh, ſhall he find faith on the earth? See Luke xviii. 8.

† Revel. xx. 8. Ezekiel's prophecies, relative to ſome future enemies of the church, are ſuppoſed to relate to earlier and leſs important adverſaries than thoſe deſcribed under the ſame myſterious titles by St. John: they, perhaps, refer to the Turks, who were of Scythian extraction; and the Ottoman empire cannot well be ſuppoſed to laſt till the concluſion of the millennium. Fuller and Mede hazard a conjecture, that the Gog and Magog of St. John may be the nations of America, who were, probably, colonies, or deſcendants of the Scythians. St. John ſpeaks of the laſt enemies of the Jews aſſembled from all quarters of the earth for final deſtruction. See Biſhop Newton on the Prophecies, Vol. III. c. xx. p. 343—348. Mede, Vol. II. Book III. p. 713.

‡ Rev. xx. 11—13. Brightman ſuppoſes, that the reſurrection here ſpoken of, is but a ſhadow of the full reſtoration of the Jewiſh nation; but the general current

heavens ſhall fly away and vaniſh, and the dead, ſmall and great, ſhall ſtand before God; and the book (of judgment) which is the book of life, ſhall be opened, and the dead ſhall be judged out of thoſe things which were written in the books, according to their works; and the ſea ſhall give up the dead which are in it; and death and hell ſhall deliver up the dead which are in them; and they ſhall be judged, every man, according to their works; and death and hell, thoſe ſubject to their powers, ſhall be caſt into the lake of fire, and be condemned to the ſecond death *; and whoever ſhall not be found written in the book of life, ſhall be caſt into the lake of fire †.

Such are ſome of the particulars relating to the glorious reign of Chriſt, of which the

rent of the interpreters authoriſes us to conſider it as the clear deſcription of the final judgment. See Brightman in Revel. xx. 11.

* Rev. xx. 14. xxi. 8. The ſecond death is a phraſe for the puniſhment of the wicked, in the Chaldee paraphraſe of Onkelos, and thoſe of Jonathan Ben Uzziel, and of Jeruſalem.

† Revel. xx. 4—15. where the detail runs in this order of events.

prophets

prophets repreſent the particulars, whether of its commencement or conſummation, in one general account. The ſtages and appropriate circumſtances of each period, it is not poſſible to define; for the prophecies relating to the ſubject, are involved in an obſcurity which time only can diſperſe; as, previouſly to the advent of Chriſt, many predictions relating to the Meſſiah were dark, and apparently inconſiſtent; and as through every part of ſcripture there are paſſages of obſcure alluſion to future circumſtances, which can be elucidated only in their accompliſhment: ſhadows which gradually diſappear, and ſucceſſively vaniſh, before the brightneſs of thoſe diſpenſations which they deſcribe.

The doctrine of the ſpiritual reign of Chriſt, as diſcreetly maintained, as built on the expectation of a glorious and triumphant ſtate of the church, may tend to encourage a confidence in God's word, and a reliance on the accompliſhment of prophecy in its reference to future events. As that doctrine has been perverted, and mixed with intemperate fancies, it has often led to very miſchievous and fatal conſequences. In the firſt ages of chriſtianity, and even in the days of

our Saviour, the notion of the immediate eſtabliſhment of a temporal kingdom, by Chriſt, appears to have prevailed: from an expectation of the full completion of the prophecies concerning the Meſſiah, at the firſt coming of our Lord; from want of diſcrimination of the predictions which related reſpectively to the firſt or ſecond advent; and from an aggregate contemplation of the accumulated particulars, from the commencement till the conſummation of Chriſt's kingdom. Hence, in conſequence of ſuch confuſed notions, we find even the diſciples enquiring of Chriſt, immediately after his reſurrection, whether he would, at that time, reſtore again (or rather grant, or eſtabliſh) * the kingdom to Iſrael: the kingdom in which, probably, not yet awake from the dreams of temporal power, they ſuppoſed that their crucified Lord would avenge himſelf of his enemies, vindicate his inſulted dignity, and eſtabliſh the earthly ſovereignty, to which they believed him to be entitled; the kingdom, in which, the mother of Zebedee's children, knowing not what ſhe

* Αποκαθιςανεις, Acts i. 6.

aſked,

aſked, had petitioned for rank and precedency for her ſons *.

When Chriſt, however, after his reſurrection, had opened the minds of his diſciples, that they might underſtand the ſcriptures, and when the Holy Ghoſt had deſcended upon them, for the communication of divine wiſdom, the nature of Chriſt's kingdom became better underſtood; the periods of his advents were diſtinguiſhed; the full conſummation of the perfections of his kingdom appeared removed to a greater diſtance, and the eye of faith contemplated the bleſſings of a remoter proſpect, to be realiſed in the univerſal eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity †.

* Matt. xx. 21, 22. Luke xxiii. 42.

† When the ſacred writers affirmed that the coming of the Lord drew nigh, they ſpoke of his coming to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. James v. 8. Heb. x. 37. Philip. iv. 5. So when St. Peter ſaid, that the end of all things was at hand, he meant all things relating to the Jewiſh polity. 1 Peter iv. 7. St. Paul, conſiſtently with this, aſſured the Theſſalonians, that with reſpect to them, the day of Chriſt, that day in which all Chriſtians were to be gathered to him, was not immediately at hand, ενεστηκεν, and that it ſhould not come till after the revelation of the man of ſin, whom the Lord would deſtroy finally with the brightneſs of his coming. 2 Theſſ. ii. 1—8.

Chriſt, when enquired of concerning the period of the coming of this kingdom, told his diſciples, that it was not for them to know the times and the ſeaſons, which the Father had put in his own power *; and in the deſcription of his future advent, he blended with the particulars of his appearance a final judgment, the circumſtances of his coming to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem †. Of the day, and of the hour of his ultimate coming, "no man knoweth; no, not the "angels which are in heaven; neither the "Son, (in his human character) but the Fa-"ther ‡." We know only, that ſome preparatory circumſtances muſt take place.

The notion that the continuance of the world is limited to ſix thouſand years, is derived from a tradition of uncertain authority, though of the higheſt antiquity. It is uſually traced up to Elias, a rabbinical writer, who flouriſhed about two centuries before the birth of Chriſt; and, by ſome, even to Elias the Tiſhbite. It certainly obtained among

* Acts i. 6, 7. † Matt. xxiv.

‡ See Mark xiii. 32. and Whitby.

the

the Chaldeans, from the earlieſt times *; and is countenanced by Barnabas †, Irenæus, and other primitive writers ‡; yet, as it has not ſanction from the ſcriptures, we are not bound to reſpect it any farther than as a doubtful tradition. But though the period of the ſetting up of Chriſt's kingdom was not actually defined, the converts to the faith of Chriſt were inſtructed to pray for its advancement; though the time of his appearance, to conclude that diſpenſation with his

* Plutarch. de Iſid. & Oſirid. p. 408. Sixt. Senens. Biblioth. Lib. II. Vocab. Elias. Gemar. Abed. Zareh. c. i. R. Abrah. Sebah. in Gen. i. 2 Eſdras vii. 30. Mede and Burnet's Theory, Lib. III. c. v. The ſtory of the Phœnix is ſuppoſed to have been framed, with ſymbolical alluſion, to the expected renovation of the world. The bird is uſually repreſented as living 1000 years. See Plin. Nat. Hiſt. Lib. X. c. ii. and Tacitus. Annal. Lib. VI. § 28. Chæremon the Egyptian, ſuppoſes it to live 6000, or 7000 years. See Voſſ. Sibyll. Orac. c. v. ex Tzek. Chiliad. v. Hiſt. VI. The fathers produce the phœnix as an argument of the reſurrection. Clement. Epiſt. I. c. xxv.

† Barnabas, § 15.

‡ Irenæus, Lib. V. c. 28, 30. Lactant. Lib. VII. c. xxiv. Cyprian. Exhortat. ad Martyr, c. xviii. Auguſt. de Civit. Dei. Lib. XX. c. vii.

judgments, was concealed, his diſciples were taught to watch for, and to obſerve its ſigns.

The doctrine of the reign of ſaints, as very generally believed during the three firſt centuries of the church, certainly animated the zeal and fortitude of the primitive Chriſtians, who, perhaps, hoped too literally to participate of a ſpeedy and earthly reſurrection *, though inſtructed by their inſpired teachers, "to ſet their affections on things "above, where Chriſt ſitteth at the right "hand of God †."

A modern hiſtorian, whoſe want of candour and miſrepreſentations have been frequently expoſed ‡, and who is particularly unſucceſsful in his ſtatement of ſome of the ſecondary cauſes, which he ſuppoſes to have contributed to the growth of the Chriſtian church,

* Dodwel. Differt. Cyprian Differt. XII. § 19—21.

† Coloſſ. iii. 1—3. 1 Cor. xv. 19.

‡ Gibbon's Decline and Fall of Rom. Emp. c. xv. Mr. Gibbon preſumes not to inſinuate ought againſt the fundamental evidence of chriſtianity, though he detracts from its influence, and ſneers at its ſubordinate teſtimonies. The writers who, profeſſing a general reverence for religion, endeavour, by artful inſinuation, to diſparage its proofs, diſplay the malevolence, without the courage of its open adverſaries.

aſſerts,

aſſerts, " that the doctrine of the millennium, as adapted to the deſires and apprehenſions of mankind, contributed, in a conſiderable degree, to the progreſs of the Chriſtian faith." If, ſo far, we aſſent to his aſſertion, we muſt obſerve that he betrays ſome deſign to miſtate the truth, when he intimates, that the doctrine was propagated with deſign to aſſiſt the cauſe of religion, and that it was laid aſide when the edifice of the church was almoſt completed; reporting it to have been firſt treated as a profound allegory, to have been conſidered, by degrees, as a doubtful and uſeleſs opinion, and to have been at length rejected as an abſurd invention of hereſy *. Whereas the truth is, as we have ſeen, that the doctrine was, at firſt, received as grounded on the ſure word of ſcripture, and as ſupported by antient tradition; that it was afterwards mingled with, and debaſed by ſpurious additions, which tended to leſſen its authority, and even to reflect diſcredit on the book of Revelation, in the opinion of thoſe who

* The Romaniſts, indeed, from the time of Damarſus, decried the doctrine, and repreſented the reign of ſaints as an idolatrous notion.

did

did not accurately diſcriminate its accounts from the extravagant notions of the millennarians; and which could not, as Origen obſerves, but bring an imputation upon chriſtianity itſelf with the Heathens, who had better opinions *.

* The doctrine of the millennium, blended with extravagant notions, was branded as an error of Cerinthus; and by thoſe who did not ſeparate the ſpurious from the ſacred deſcription, was thought to reflect ſome diſcredit on the book of revelation itſelf, in the time of Euſebius; and even to render it ſuſpected as the work of Cerinthus. Euſebius admitted it to be the work of John; but, for ſome frivolous reaſons, not of John the Evangeliſt. If the book is not enumerated in the preſent copies of the council of Laodicæa, among books *to be read*, it was, not long after its appearance, received by the churches of Aſia, of Syria, of Samaria, of Africa, Egypt, and Rome; and is reckoned as canonical by later councils, upon the teſtimony of the earlieſt writers, from the time of Juſtin Martyr and Irenæus. It is ſingular that any writer ſhould now preſume to impeach its authority, after the full inveſtigation by which that authority has been pronounced by Sir Iſaac Newton, to be more fully atteſted than that of any other book of the New Teſtament; not to mention the internal proofs of its inſpiration, derived from the completion of its prophecies. See Newton, chap. i. on Apocal. Twell's Critic. Exam. of New Teſt. and Coſin's Can. of Script. § 62.

That

That the doctrine has ſometimes been made a ſubject of unprofitable ſpeculation, and a pretext for unjuſtifiable conduct, cannot, with truth, be denied. The wild enthuſiaſts, who have, at different times, been inflamed with the hopes of its promiſed bleſſings, have clamoured, with unbecoming intemperance, for the eſtabliſhment of the expected empire. They whom heated imaginations, and ſelfiſh views, have miſled; they who have fancied, and they who have hypocritically profeſſed themſelves "the meek, who ſhall "inherit the earth," have often ſought to eſtabliſh their community, and ſchemes of equal participation, on the pretence of contributing to facilitate the coming of Chriſt's kingdom. The dawn of the reformation was obſcured by the proceedings of thoſe men who pretended an heavenly commiſſion, to erect the dominion of Chriſt; and who, in the attempt to realiſe their wild and viſionary ſchemes, introduced popular commotions, and ſcenes of the wildeſt anarchy and deſtruction *.

* See the account of the Munſter Anabaptiſts of the ſixteenth century in Moſheim, Vol. IV. p. 27. and 139. 17 Centur. § 2. Part II. § 22. Burnet's Hiſt. of his own Time, Tom. I. p. 67.

The factions of the laſt age, even in our own country, artfully availed themſelves of popular deluſions on this ſubject*; and in the ſeditious commotions of later periods, we may ſee a tinge derived from the infuſion of a ſimilar ſpirit.

A deſire to be the humble inſtrument of God, in the furtherance of his deſigns, is praiſe-worthy and good; we muſt be careful, however, to diſtinguiſh this deſire from the ſuggeſtion of any intemperate motive, which, like the evil ſpirit that enticed Ahab, may lead us to deſtruction. We cannot conſpire with God's views but by a conſiderate and circumſpect obſervance of his laws. That no man can accelerate or retard the approach of the expected kingdom is certain, however active righteouſneſs may be made ſubſervient

* "All the civil blood," ſays Thorndyke; "all that abominable deſolation in religion, which we have ſeen, our late uſurper ſeemeth to have accounted meer godlineſs, in order to that work which God had deſigned him for, as he thought himſelf inſpired to believe: nay, did not ſome of the reformation prick up their ears, and begin to think well of his chriſtianity for that work ſake." See Juſt Weights and Meaſures, page 11, 12.

to

to its advancement. They who are led by indiſtinct fancies and preſumptuous confidence, to predict its coming from the changes and revolutions which they behold, ſhould be careful, leſt they contribute, however undeſignedly, to inflame the enthuſiaſm of the credulous, and to ſtir up the activity of the fooliſh. We "muſt ſtand ſtill, and ſee the "ſalvation of God," not inſenſible to the progreſs of the divine decrees, but not impatient to anticipate their completion *. The moſt poſitive computations have often proved erroneous †; but ſtill, "though the viſion be "yet for an appointed time, at the end it will "ſpeak; though it tarry, wait for it, becauſe it "will ſurely come ‡." "The kingdom of God "is already within us §;" and many preparatory circumſtances have already taken place. When its final eſtabliſhment ſhall be effected, it muſt be by the demonſtration of that power which muſt characteriſe every immediate diſ-

*, James iv. 7. Dan. xii. 4.

† Lactantius Div. Inſtit. Lib. VII. c. xxv. Whiſton, &c.

‡ Habakkuk ii. 2.

§ Luke xvii. 21.

penſation

penſation of God. It will be a kingdom, we know, "not of this world;" not of worldly power, and ambitious precedence; not of temporal ſplendor, or earthly aggrandiſement. It will be "the ſtone cut out of "the mountain without hands;" without human aid or human power. It will be the perfect eſtabliſhment of God's laws; the glorious manifeſtation of his power, the ſplendid exemplification of the excellency and rewards of his religion.

THE END.